Roberta's Flying Courage

To Junior
from
norma jean
Xmas 1938

ROBERTA'S FLYING COURAGE

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Once she found herself dropping "neck to neck," but the machine was heavier, so it spurted ahead.

Roberta's Flying Courage

by

HARRISON BARDWELL

Author of

The Lurtiss Field Mystery
Etc.

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I

JOB HUNTING

Roberta Langwell, sixteen, sat at the extreme end of a long bench and shivered in her mental boots. It wasn't the weather that caused icicles to run up and down her spine, because it was a perfectly lovely day late in June, but the rest of the bench, beside some extra chairs were occupied by a number of self-possessed looking young somebodys who, like herself were waiting to be interviewed by the head of the personnel department of the Lurtiss Airplane Co., Inc.

Roberta had just graduated from a High School business course and this was her very first experience applying for a position. She had a positive conviction that the try-out would be decidedly different from any sort of school examination. The door she was facing, formidably marked PRIVATE, opened briskly and in the brief interval necessary to emit an office boy, Roberta caught a glimpse of a capable looking woman seated behind a desk. To add to her impressiveness, she wore nose glasses attached with a wide ribbon. This vision did not lessen the girl's nervous dread of the coming encounter and for the first time she wasn't sorry there were so many applicants in the line ahead of her.

A buzzer rang and a girl went in, her head in the air. Five minutes later she came out, a defiant blaze in her eyes. After that they went, one at a time, the line moved up, and three more girls took places emptied by the eliminating process. Almost an hour passed; then came Roberta's turn. Her brain felt like a vast vacuum and her fingers twisted a hard knot in the handle of her bag.

She had no idea how she got into The Presence, but she saw on a long block on the desk, "Miss Wells."

"Be seated, Miss Langwell," said Miss Wells and Roberta sat down as if she expected a gun to go off in front of her. "Did you bring your school records?"

"Yes, Miss Wells," she stammered and the Personnel Head gave her a closer scrutiny as she accepted the cards. She looked them over carefully, made some notes on a printed sheet with a number in one corner, and made some checks in little squares, then someone called her away for a few minutes. During the interval, Roberta devoted herself to trying to warm her hands. She didn't succeed very well, but she was less shivery when Miss Wells returned.

"If it was a few minutes after five o'clock and you were ready to go home and your department head came in with a number of letters he wanted to get out, what would you do?" It was an astonishing sort of question.

"Why, I'd do them," Roberta answered promptly.

"Suppose he did the same thing repeatedly?" Roberta was sure there was some sort of catch in it, but she simply couldn't think of an answer except the one she had just given.

"Do them."

"I'll give you a few letters." A sharp pencil and notebook were handed over and Miss Wells began to dictate. At first she went slowly, hesitated, repeated, and the girl began to feel as if it wasn't such a difficult trial after all. Then she went faster, and once, while she was speaking, she turned her head and looked out of the window.

"I'm sorry, I didn't get that." Miss Wells repeated, then went on. Once she gave a man's name, a complicated name, and Roberta left a line, and went on. At the end she looked up, her face was flushed. "I don't know how to spell the gentleman's name," she admitted, and felt sure that this was her finish. Miss Wells spelled it.

"Here are two inquiries. Take this one and compose a brief letter telling the writer we received it and the matter has been

turned over to our purchasing agent. Do the same with this one, only make it, our production man. Fill out this card and address envelopes to these names. There is a typewriter over there, you will find letterheads in the desk."

As she had given the instructions, Roberta made notes, then she gathered the things up and went to the machine. It seemed useless to go on with the test but she sat down and tackled the job. Roberta was like that. Finally the last envelope was typed, the work arranged, and she sat back in her chair.

"If you have finished, leave it on my desk. We have been interviewing a number of applicants and you will hear from us if we can take you."

"Thank you!" Roberta was grateful for having survived the ordeal, but she was utterly hopeless regarding her chances of securing the position and walked out of Miss Well's office with a heavy heart. Making her way slowly toward the main office of the new factory she caught glimpses of numer-

ous departments of various sizes and it seemed to her as if at least a thousand people must be employed there. Every one of them looked the acme of capable efficiency.

"Of course I couldn't expect to get the very first job I went after, and I ought to have more sense than to hope to get in a place like this. They have to have experienced workers all over the plant, not greenhorns who have to learn everything, almost," she argued to herself.

She reached the entrance and although she hated to open the great door and go out, she gave herself a resolute shake, and proceeded briskly, in as good an imitation of indifference as she could muster. Outside the sun shone brilliantly on the immense grounds, which stretched away for nearly a mile, and at one end she could see long hangars built in straight rows, like the streets of a well set-out modern town. The air was filled with the drone of motors, and glancing up, Roberta smiled in spite of her gloom at the planes circling, climbing, diving, and soaring into the sky until the blue of the hor-

izon swallowed them from her sight.

"It must be simply gorgeous to be in one," she sighed.

"Going to the depot, Miss?" It was a courteous voice that inquired and although Roberta wished heartily that she could answer haughtily, "No, I'm going sky-piloting," of course she couldn't. She looked at the company's bus driver and told him politely that she was.

"Hop in," he invited. The machine was empty and Roberta took a seat near the front. "Which way you headed?"

"I want to catch the train for Great Neck," she replied.

"We have just time to do it," he told her as he took his seat and closed the door. Then he threw off the brake and presently they were headed toward the depot. The solitary passenger listened longingly to the roaring of the motors which raced tantalizingly above them, and watched the great factory until it was lost from sight behind a grove of tall trees. "Answer the advertisement?" the man inquired amiably.

"Yes, I did," Roberta replied.

"Must be jobs are scarce. I took forty women to the plant last night and this morning. The company needs real live-wire people. No one has much time to train inexperienced ones," he chatted. By that time they had reached the Garden City depot. "Here's your train, Miss."

"Thank you very much!" she said as she climbed out.

"Don't mention it," he grinned.

Half an hour later Roberta turned into her own yard just as her mother came out onto the veranda. Mrs. Langwell knew without being told that her daughter was greatly discouraged over the morning's adventure, but she smiled her pleasantest, as if she did not notice the lagging steps.

"So glad you got here early, dear. We have an invitation to the matinee and I should have been disappointed if you could not go along with me," she announced.

"That is nice, Mummy, all right." Roberta gave her mother a kiss and in a little while the two were seated in the cheery dining

room. Mrs. Langwell had anticipated that her daughter might come home feeling rather low in her mind, so she had fixed several of her favorite dishes. The meal looked inviting, but they had barely started, when they heard an automobile come up the drive and stop at the door.

"Why, it's Dad," Roberta exclaimed in surprise, and she jumped up to arrange his place while her mother went to meet him. The two came in. The newcomer was a tall, jolly man, who had grey eyes like his daughter's, and a permanent smile.

"Happened to be in this neighborhood so I thought you would not mind having me stop for lunch," he chuckled.

"It's just great you did," they assured him.

"Well, how about the application at the Lurtiss Company this morning, daughter? Did you go?"

"Yes, I went, but, oh—OH Dad I did bungle things so. Once I didn't hear what Miss Wells said and had to ask her to repeat, and then after that, I had to ask her how to spell

a man's name—and oh—"

"It was better to ask her to repeat and to spell the man's name than for you to take a stab at it and get it wrong," he tried to console her. "Was that all?"

"Not half. I took a long time to do the letters. The o's and the u's were full of ink, so I stopped to clean them out, and then, when I got to work, oh, my fingers all acted like glass thumbs."

"In other words you were scared stiff," her father laughed. "You'll feel more like yourself after you have been to the theatre."

"I have been thinking it would be better for you to come with me to Montauk this summer and have a good time and then start your business career in the fall," Mrs. Langwell suggested.

"But Mother, the shorthand teacher said if I could get a position right away, I won't lose anything I have been studying. I'd like to get one if I can," Roberta pleaded.

"All right, my dear," her mother agreed.

"I understand they are easier to get in the fall when things are starting up after

summer vacations," her father put in. "But there is no harm in trying to get one now." So the subject was dropped for the time being and when the ladies were ready, Dad drove them to the playhouse. The show was an exceptionally good one and during the performance, the young girl forgot all about jobs, unruly typewriters and personnel managers.

"It was great, Mummy, thank you," she said as they came out to the street with the laughing crowd.

"Glad you enjoyed it and it was mighty nice to have you with me," Mrs. Langwell smiled. She was a tall, not too slender woman, with wonderful brown eyes. When she was little, Roberta used to say they were golden, but that was because of the happy lights that danced in them. Her mother claimed she had only one grief in life and that was her children were growing up too fast. At home they found a letter from Harvey, who intended to be an engineer, and was getting some practical experience in his chosen profession.

"Dear Family," he wrote:

"This is a whale of a country and every time I look about me I see something beautiful. The mountains on one side of the valley are quite close, almost on top of us in fact. There's a great high ledge which stands almost perpendicular for nearly two hundred feet. It's like a wall. The other side is ten miles away, and there they begin in rolling foot hills, each row higher than the one in front, like the seats in the stadium. I wish you could come and see the place before I leave. Bud is nuts about it too, and we are making fairly decent progress with the job of spreading superfluous water so that it will flow to sections which need it very badly. The company has a couple of airplanes and two pilots who make trips every day for mail and supplies. They are both fine chaps. One of them said he will teach us to fly provided we get the consent of our parents. It will be corking to learn. We have to do it slowly, I mean at odd times, and when the planes are not in use. Lonford, he's our superintendent, says it will be an advantage for

him to have two extra men in case of emergency. If one of the pilots were taken sick, or anything, we are kind of out of the world, and would be out of luck if the boss had to get something through to headquarters in a hurry. Don't be afraid, Mum and Dad, it's perfectly safe and I'll be mighty careful. Please be good sports and wire the necessary permission.

"Lots of love to you both and to the Kid. I think she is too young to be going into business. An office is no place for little girls. She'd be much better at Montauk this summer than hammering away all day on a typewriter for some old grouch.

Your son and brother,
Harv."

"Little girl, indeed," Roberta exclaimed indignantly. "I'm almost as tall as Mother." She stood straight beside the older woman to prove her point, and her parents had to admit that she was right.

"I do not know about Harvey's learning aviation," Mr. Langwell began doubtfully.

"That seems to me rather a hazardous way of doing it. The country he describes is very wild and rugged, just the sort of place where accidents could hardly be avoided except by very experienced men."

"Yes indeed. Here on Long Island where a plane can land almost anywhere it does not seem so dangerous. I should think, if he wants to learn aviation, it would be much better for him to take a regular course of instruction," Mrs. Langwell added emphatically.

"My view exactly. In a regular course they have numerous tests and methods of telling, without risk, just how well fitted a boy is before he goes into the air. I'll wire him that we do not approve."

"Oh, Dad," Roberta protested quickly, entirely forgetting that Harvey had written of her as a little girl, "if it will be an advantage to his job, make him more valuable to the company—and the superintendent said it would—"

"I appreciate that," her father admitted.

In her mind Roberta could see again the

great birds soaring smoothly above the Lurtiss field, landing, taking off, soaring away as if eager to be in the air. She thought that she understood exactly how her brother felt about the two planes he watched every day, and she knew, although Harvey had not said a great deal, that he was mighty anxious to learn.

"And those pilots, why Dad, they must be first class flyers or they would not be on a job like that. Don't tell him you do not approve, please. He'll be so disappointed," she urged. Roberta was like that. She had always adored her big, nineteen-year-old brother, and although he sometimes teased her, and seemed always to think that she ought to be kept in a roll of cotton, they were very loyal to each other, and often, when Dad and Mother seemed inclined to disapprove of a proposed project, would unite forces. "I'll tell you—wire him to be sure that the pilot believes he will make a flier before they start the lessons, and not to do any more flying than he has to until he is A-One." The parent's eyes met. Young per-

sons do not always realize that it is hard for grown-ups to refuse a plea, and this suggestion seemed a pretty good one to Mr. and Mrs. Langwell.

"Suppose we sleep on it," Dad said and Roberta grinned happily, because she knew that would probably mean consent.

"You are a pair of peaches," she informed them. "Did you bring home a newspaper? I want to see if there are any advertisements."

"Here you are," Dad answered.

Soon Roberta's nose was buried in the Female Help Wanted column. She found several interesting advertisements, but every single one of them insisted upon "experience." Finally the girl gave it up in disgust and resolved to call upon her shorthand teacher the first thing in the morning and ask for suggestions. Now that Harvey was going to be a pilot she wished harder than ever that she might have been given the position with the Lurtiss people. It would be wonderful having her brother a flier, and her lively imagination pictured him guiding

one of the humming machines across canyons, circling snowy mountain peaks, perhaps accomplishing some marvelous feat of daring. Later he might have a plane of his own, or the use of one anyway, and then he would take her sky-riding. How perfectly gorgeous that would be.

"Dreaming, daughter?" Dad inquired.

"Yes. I'm flying with Harv and we are pursued by a dreadful enemy who is determined to bring us down to destruction," she laughed and her father joined heartily.

"But the bitter enemy is the one who bites the blistering dust and you two sail off safe and sound, leaving the foe to repent his sin while he famishes of hunger."

"Nothing of the sort. We go back and pick him up—"

"At great risk to your own lives?"

"Oh to be sure, terrible risk. Dad, are you laughing at me?" she demanded as she seated herself on his lap and ran her fingers through his hair until it stood on end

"How could I think of such a thing?"

"It seems to me," her mother put in mild-

ly, "that a young person who is going job-hunting in the morning, had better be getting all the beauty sleep she can tonight."

"Right-O," Roberta agreed promptly and bade them "Good night."

When she was in bed, Mother came for a chat. They loved those last few minutes every night. Then Dad looked in, and after that, the girl closed her eyes and immediately began to dance on the o's and the u's of a giant typewriter, but the other letters tangled themselves provokingly about her feet until she fell under the space-bar, and after going down, down for miles, she landed on the tail of an airplane which proceeded to drag her through water, like a submarine. Then she saw Harvey, way in the distance, coming toward her on a whirling umbrella, while his pal, Wilbur Voorhees, astride an enormous whale, bumped into her so hard she lost her hold. She kicked out with all her might only to discover that she wasn't in water at all, but in the air, wearing a bathing suit, and ducking into clouds, as if they were great rollers. One of them curled up to

swallow her, but she saw a toy balloon which she grabbed and hung on tight as it carried her to a zig-zag fence around the top of a mountain. The rails were icy and she slipped off, went skating down until at last she landed on the stonework of a new dam where she found Mrs. Langwell, in overalls, directing an army of beavers who were carrying logs.

"Oh Mother," she shouted as she slid past.

"Yes dear, I thought you were not awake," Mrs. Langwell answered.

"Why, it's morning," the girl exclaimed in surprise.

"It certainly is." Roberta snuggled a moment in the warm nest, then remembered she was going after a job today, so she hopped out of bed and was soon splashing in the bath room.

II.

Tried-Out

Breakfast over, Roberta helped her mother until nine o'clock because she knew that she could not get her teacher until that hour. It seemed as if it would never come, but finally it did. Then the telephone rang and it proved to be a call for Mrs. Langwell. After that a classmate called the young girl and they had a lengthy discussion on this and that, so it was nine-thirty before she was ready to put in her call. She took up the receiver and as she pressed it to her ear, it clashed persistently. Someone else wanted the line.

"Hello," Roberta said impatiently. She did wish that whoever it was could have waited a few minutes longer.

"I wish to speak to Miss Roberta Lang-

well," announced a crisp, unfamiliar voice in a very business-like manner.

"This is Miss Langwell," Roberta replied.

"Oh, thank you. This is the Lurtiss Airplane Company. I am Miss Wells' secretary. You made an application yesterday. We find that we shall need three new stenographers and Miss Wells would like to know if you can report for duty this morning. We will give you a try-out for the rest of the week and if your work is satisfactory, the position will be a permanent one."

"Oh," was all that Roberta could answer. Her brain was full of words, appropriate phrases, and correct replies, but not a single one of them could she utter.

"What is it?" Mrs. Langwell thought something unpleasant had happened.

"Can you come?"

"Come—me, oh, yes, yes I can come. I'll come, I'll be there, that is, I mean, I'll take the next train, yes—"

"That's good. We'll look for you. Report at this office, please." The Lurtiss end of the

line clicked, but Roberta forgot to hang up the receiver.

"What is it, dear?" her mother repeated anxiously. Roberta looked at her with eyes as wide as she could open them, then she drew in a deep breath and exhaled it like a steam whistle. That out of her system, she jumped to her feet, grabbed the excellent lady about the waist, and whirled her around the room. "My dear, I'll shake you if you do not stop," Mrs. Langwell panted.

"It was Miss Secretary's wells, and she—"

"What—"

"I mean it was Miss Wells' Lurtiss—"

"My dear, sit down!" Mrs. Langwell gently pushed her daughter into a chair. "Now, calm yourself. Do you mean that it was Miss Wells' secretary and the Lurtiss people are going to give you a position?"

"Surely, Mummy, that's what I'm trying to tell you. They have three positions and they are going to try me out for the rest of the week. Isn't it scrumptious!" She hopped up again, but her mother dodged.

"If you are to catch the next train, Honey, you must not waste another minute," she warned. "I am glad they called you."

Ten minutes later the girl went dancing out of the house and her mother stood on the veranda watching her as she hurried off toward the depot. At the corner Roberta turned and waved, Mrs. Langwell responded cheerfully, but sighed a bit when her daughter was no longer in sight.

"Goodness, it seems as if it were only yesterday that she was a baby and went down that same path tumbling over her Teddy Bear."

In due time Roberta was again ushered into Miss Wells' office and the personnel manager greeted her with a smile. "I'll take you to our office manager and she will explain what is needed. As my secretary told you, we have three openings, but we have taken on five girls. Two of them are already here, so do your best and Saturday they will let you know if your work is satisfactory," she said briskly. She led the way to a huge office where rows and rows of desks made it

look exactly like some sort of class room. A tall, middle-aged woman came to meet them and Roberta was introduced to Miss Morris, who took her in charge.

"I am certainly glad to have the additional help, for I have a great deal of work," she said quietly. She assigned the new girl to a locker, then installed Roberta at one of the desks. The office manager looked to see that the chair was the right height, the machine in order, and plenty of stationery in the drawers. "I wish you would start on this typing. It must be done accurately, so be careful. Is this your first position?"

"Yes it is," Roberta managed to answer.

"Don't be afraid to ask questions and don't try to hurry. There are a great many specifications in this work, so be sure that you do not make a mistake in copying; that is important." Roberta tackled the task assigned to her and Miss Morris lingered in the vicinity until she was called away by the arrival of another girl, who was given the desk across from Miss Langwell's. As her fingers flew over the keys she was conscious

of the office manager's repeating the instructions to the late-comer.

"I understood there was an opening in one of the private offices. I'd rather take dictation than be in the typing department," the girl announced loudly and Roberta gave a little gasp of astonishment.

"This is what has to be done right now," Miss Morris answered a trifle stiffly, so the girl took her seat and soon her machine began to click. Once Roberta glanced up and saw her jaws were working harder on her gum than her fingers were on the typewriter. Then a third girl arrived and was placed on the other side. She set to work, but she did it spasmodically; her nose and hair seemed to require a great deal of her attention. As Roberta worked she became greatly interested in what she was typing and was thrilled when she realized that she was copying specifications for a new plane. The clang of a bell came so sharply that it made her jump.

"Lunch time," Miss Morris announced. "Some of the girls will show you to the res-

taurant." It was a long, sunny room, painted attractively, fitted out with small tables and some long ones with high-backed seats by the wall. As luck would have it, the five new girls met at the counter where they gave their orders.

"I saw you in the office yesterday," one announced to Roberta, who had been much too self-conscious the day before to really notice any of them especially.

"Is that so?" she asked politely.

"Yes. I did too," put in one whose place was at Roberta's right. "My goodness deary, how you did hammer away this morning. Is this your first job?"

"The very first," Roberta admitted. She thought the "deary" unnecessary, but it was a wonderful thing being a part of a great organization and turning out copies of some new discovery in aviation.

"Here's a table. Don't kill yourself working. They'll think more of you if you show your independence," was the advice of number one, but Roberta didn't understand what she meant.

"I'm not likely to do that," she smiled.

"It's good advice. I started three years ago and I've had seven jobs, all good ones," number two told them with real pride.

"Didn't you like them?" Roberta was puzzled. Seven jobs sounded like a good many. She had been enjoying visions of staying on this one, if she got it, for years and years.

"Oh yes, but you'll find out in business there's an awful lot of jealousy. If you are any good someone is sure to try to shove ahead of you and I ain't the kind to stand that sort of thing for a minute."

"Oh." Roberta wasn't a bit enlightened, but she ate her lunch and thought the girls, all of them, rather jolly. Some of the older ones spoke a few words, or smiled in a friendly fashion.

The afternoon was a repetition of the morning. She plugged away at the specifications. Occasionally Miss Morris came for the finished sheets, and finally five o'clock arrived. Roberta's back felt stiff and she wondered anxiously if she had made any

mistakes. The girls were filing out, but she stopped to glance over the page. She did find an error, so she corrected it immediately, then took the work to the manager's desk.

"It's always a bit hard the first day," Miss Morris told her. "Are you tired?"

"A little," Roberta answered.

"Tomorrow will be easier. Good night."

"Good night." Roberta caught the bus en route for the depot and the good-natured chauffeur grinned at her.

"See that you landed the job."

"I'm being tried out," she told him.

"That's something," he replied encouragingly, but Roberta was appalled when she thought of how little she knew about business, and wished that she could be as indifferent as the new girls with whom she had talked.

At dinner, Dad and Mother were keenly interested in her account of the day, but they made few comments, and the evening was a very quiet one in the Langwell home. The daughter of the house spent some time at the piano and the beloved music helped her

recover her happy spirit. Suddenly she remembered Harvey.

"Did you send the telegram, Dad?" she demanded. "Did you tell Harv he might take the lessons?"

"Yes, I sent it. I told him he wasn't to do any stunt work until he was A-One and advised him, if he got an opportunity, to do some trying-out in a school or field. The added experience will help him greatly."

"You're a peach," she laughed. "Harv and I know that we used top notch judgment in our choice of parents." She took her place on his lap. It was most comforting. Dad was really all a girl could ask for and Mummy too was the best ever. They never fussed, but when they did put down a rule they meant it. The two young Langwells had learned years before that the demands of Father and Mother were on the whole mighty reasonable, so now, when they were both facing the world, a little on their own, they were a pair of clear-headed individuals, possessing an appreciation of their own limitations.

The next afternoon Roberta was sent to

take dictation from one of the salesmen who had to get out his reports. He was a young chap, inclined to be blustery, but after the first few minutes she managed to understand what he wanted and take what he said quite easily. Later she went to the advertising manager's office. He was one of the executives, most efficient, quick and impatient, but she lived through that ordeal also. Back at her own machine the letters were typed and handed to Miss Morris, who looked them over, made some suggestions regarding them, and gave the girl some instructions as to the firm's policy with its correspondence.

"I'll do this one over," Roberta offered, so Miss Morris returned it to her. Again she was busy at her machine when the bell rang, but she did not even look up until her right hand neighbor leaned over and whispered.

"Say, deary, they ain't paying you for over-time are they! Do it in the morning!"

"I'd like to get it out of the way now," Roberta answered. She felt as if she wouldn't like coming the next morning and

doing something over that she had left.

"Oh well, it's your own funeral. They won't appreciate it one bit."

The girl flounced off and Roberta worked away. In ten minutes the letter was ready, and she handed it to Miss Morris who was still at her desk.

"Thank you for doing it. We have been frightfully busy. Usually we can all go when the bell rings and when the work is light we sometimes get away earlier. Good night."

Saturday morning, almost as soon as Roberta took her seat, the office manager sent her to Mr. John Trowbridge. He was one of the members of the firm and looked very much more like a college professor than a business man. He was tall and slender, wore nose glasses, spoke softly, seemed to know exactly what he wanted written before he started to dictate, so he did it evenly. Roberta took a number of his letters and thought them much more interesting than the salesman's or the advertising manager's. Being Mr. Trowbridge's secretary would be a most worth-while post, she decided.

Twice he asked her to read back what she had, and finally, when he finished, she hurried away to get it done quickly for the office closed at noon. She pulled the last sheet out of her machine a few minutes before twelve o'clock, and took it to Miss Morris.

"Thank you, Miss Langwell. This is pay day. Here is your salary for the half week."

She handed Roberta the tiny envelope and her heart leaped. She had really earned some money and she wanted to dance, but that could wait until she got home and could take her mother as a partner. Then, right on the heels of her elation a sinking feeling came into the pit of her stomach. It had been a try-out, perhaps they did not want her any more.

"Thank you," she murmured.

"Will you please open it and let me know if it is all right, then sign the book so our accounting department can check up the records." Roberta complied. There were new little crisp bills, she took them out, counted them, and made a mental calculation.

"I did not work three whole days," she said.

"That's all right. They pay you for the full day," Miss Morris smiled pleasantly. "Is there anything else in your envelope?" Roberta looked and drew out a thin little card, with three printed words, and a blank space which had been filled in with a pen. She read it twice, three times to make sure that she was not mistaken.

"Kindly report on Monday."

She was so thrilled that she couldn't say a word, so she showed it to the office manager, who nodded, as if she were pleased. "Are you glad?"

"So glad I could squeal," Roberta answered.

"Squeal away, I don't mind. I am glad, too, because you have been conscientious, your work is good, the men you went to all reported favorably, so we want to keep you."

"I want to stay." There were tears in Roberta's eyes, but they were happy ones, and she did wish that her mother were not so far away.

"Monday you will report to Mr. Trowbridge. His work has accumulated so that he needs someone in his office regularly and he said he would like to have you if you are willing to go. He is a particular man, but not hard to please if a girl tries."

"That will be wonderful," Roberta answered. "I'll see you sometimes, won't I?"

"Indeed you will, and when I'm rushed, if you have time, I'll call upon you to help me out."

The bell was about to ring, so Roberta went back to clear up her desk. She saw the girl at her right taking a slip from her envelope and she was just about to offer congratulations, when the girl crushed it in her hand, threw it on the floor, turned up her nose and without closing or straightening her desk, stamped out of the room. The other girl performed in very much the same way and Roberta rightly guessed that their slips told them they need not report on Monday. She was mighty sorry they had not won positions, but her own joy was so great that she forgot them in a few minutes and wished

she could fly home in a plane because the trains were so slow when she had such grand news to impart to her family.

Her feet skipped as they carried her around the last corner and Mrs. Langwell saw her coming, saw the gay smile which could not be subdued, and was sure that something pretty nice had happened.

"Hello darling," she said solemnly. "How did you get along?" She spoke casually as if she had no idea of what was coming. Roberta gave her a hug as they went inside the house.

"Oh Mummy, they want me to come back. Isn't it grand? And I'm going to be Mr. Trowbridge's secretary! Isn't that scrumptious! My goodness alive, I'm hungry. I got three days' pay. I thought it was a mistake, but Miss Morris said my work is good. Just look!" She produced the envelope from the depths of her bag, and poured its contents, including the magic slip, into her mother's hand.

"It's perfectly splendid, my dear, I am proud of you." Mrs. Langwell exhibited satisfying surprise and amazement, and then

consented to dance until a fragrance from the kitchen warned her that something demanded her immediate attention. "Dad will be here presently."

"Let's fool him," Roberta proposed, so when he came in both their faces were very straight and very sober. He glanced quickly at his wife, who kept her eyes cast down.

"Mighty nice day," he ventured.

"Yes it is," Roberta replied.

"I thought I should like to go to the movies this afternoon if any of my lady folk feel equal to it," he proposed. He knew perfectly well that they were nearly bursting to tell him something pleasant, but he wasn't going to spoil the fun by pretending he noticed.

"That is very kind of you, dear," Mrs. Langwell told him.

"Any news from Harvey?" he inquired as he took his place.

"Not a line, Dad."

"Oh well, boys are not very good correspondents as a rule and probably Harv is extra busy these days." He saw somthing on his plate, picked it up without looking at it,

and went on. "You know, my dear, I met Mr. Voorhees this morning, Bur's father. They are taking a cottage at Montauk for the summer. It will be pleasant having them for company." Mrs. Langwell nodded her agreement. "Saw an old friend, man I met years ago, haven't seen him in years. Nice chap he was and we had quite a gab-fest, we used to—" Roberta could contain herself no longer, so she interrupted.

"Dad, why don't you look at what's in your hand?"

"Oh, surely. What is it?" He turned the envelope over a couple of times, then exasperated them further by putting it down while he got his reading glasses from his pocket. He wiped them carefully, adjusted them to his nose as if they didn't fit very well. "Something you want me to see, my dear?"

"You look," she insisted, so he did. He poured out the bills and the slip, read the message, and smiled.

"My, my my—well, well, this is pretty good for a little girl—"

"I'm not," Roberta protested. Then of course she had to give him all the details, and he thought it was wonderful news.

III.

New Responsibility

Monday morning Roberta became a cog in the great machinery of the Lurtiss Airplane Company and at nine o'clock she reported promptly to Mr. Trowbridge, who was already at his desk. He greeted her kindly.

"Good morning, Miss Langwell."

"Good morning, Mr. Trowbridge," she replied a bit tremulously as she took her place at her own brand new desk.

"Take some letters, please."

So the day began. Incidentally, Mr. Trowbridge never came tearing in late with a batch of correspondence, but as time went on, he did give his secretary an astonishing variety of responsibilities. He was most courteous about showing her how he wanted things done, but she was sure he would not be very patient if he had to explain too often. She soon lost every shred of nervous-

ness, liked her position enormously, and nearly every day she did something interesting, for Mr. Trowbridge had charge of promotion as well as research work, and was constantly on the alert for improvements in air transportation, for passengers, freight or mail. Besides he examined various devices, possible and impossible, submitted by inventors. Only one thing was hard; that was keeping her eyes on her work when a winged machine went soaring through the air within the range of her window. How she did wish that she were a boy and could be one of those sky-pilots.

One day she took part in a demonstration in honor of a young chap, hardly out of his teens, who, in spite of fog, bad weather, failing motor and rough country, got his machine through to help a stranded family. The poor lad was so embarrassed at the ovation he was receiving, that he could hardly stammer an acknowledgement. Roberta was sorry for him, but she joined heartily in the applause and cheered him until her throat ached. It made her think about Harvey and

Wilbur Voorhees, way off in the mountains learning to fly, and she fully expected that as soon as her brother was proficient, he too would become one of the growing army of air heroes. Then, a few days later, her boss had something new for his assistant.

"We are starting a class in aviation, something out of the ordinary, Miss Langwell. Our man, Robert Wallace, is the instructor, and while he is a whiz at oral presentation, he's a flat tire when it comes to either writing or dictating his methods. We have picked out fifteen men to take the course, most of them amateurs, but of the best mental qualities we can get."

"That sounds interesting," Roberta remarked, because Mr. Trowbridge paused a moment and seemed to expect some sort of reply.

"We think so. We had a conference of the directors over the matter and decided we want to get up a book of Wallace's theories and methods."

"Yes sir."

"The class begins in the board room at

eleven o'clock this morning. I wish you would go in and take notes, complete as possible. Don't omit the questions put by the students, and the answers. They are important. We hope to get out something that can be put into general use, so other men will be equipped to conduct classes. You'll attend the entire course, please, do my office work on the side, and if it conflicts with the class work, hand it over to Miss Morris," he directed. "Do you understand?"

"Yes sir," Roberta was sure she did, and although in her heart she felt that it was quite a task, and dreaded lest she miss some important point, or get it wrong, she made up her mind to do her level best. Roberta was like that.

"I have every confidence in you," Mr. Trowbridge told her, and she thanked him. Her fingers flew over the keys as she turned out the few letters he had given her, and at fifteen minutes before eleven, armed with half a dozen sharp pencils and two note books, she made her way to the Board room, which was a very impressive place. A long

heavy table was in the center of the room, with two dozen high-backed chairs placed around it. In the place of honor on the wall hung a splendid picture of Charles Lindbergh, and other famous airmen. Under a glass case was a model of the company's first plane. A serious faced young man was the only occupant of the room when Roberta entered, but he came toward her.

"I'm Phil Fisher, Miss Langwell, and I'm going to take this course, if they don't put me out," he informed her.

"Mr. Trowbridge told me about the course," she smiled.

"Wallace is a cracker-jack; a whiz of an instructor, so the Old Man and the Gang want it preserved." She looked a bit puzzled and the young fellow grinned cheerfully. "The Old Man is my Dad and The Gang is the Board of Directors, sacred body," he explained, then she knew that she was talking with the son of the president of the firm, so she took her seat and glanced at her pencils. "Gee, you sure brought a lot of them."

"Don't want to be caught with a broken

point," she said. Just then the door opened and a tall, lanky, sandy-haired chap came in.

"Hello Kingsley, glad you got here. This is Miss Langwell."

"Pleased to meet you," Kingsley mumbled. "Didn't know there were to be any girls in the class."

"If you had known, you wouldn't have come, old sourface. Well, don't be afraid of this one. She's here to take notes. Fisher turned to Roberta. "Larry just came from Texas. Cunning little country. You may have heard of it; down in the southwest."

"Go on! We could set all New England in it and we wouldn't miss the space," Larry growled.

"That's right, and New York City could populate half the state and it wouldn't be noticed in the census," Phil retorted.

Further pleasantries were interrupted by the entrance of a small army of workmen and porters who brought in a blackboard, which they set up on an easel, a number of charts, and several great cases. In a few minutes the place was transformed, and at

eleven o'clock the fifteen students were there, standing around awkwardly. Then Mr. Fisher, senior, came in, with Robert Wallace right behind him. Roberta had met the instructor before. He was a soldierly looking man, who had joined the Canadians when the Great War broke out in 1914, and had been put into the air service, where he conducted himself so well that among the decorations he wore was a V. C. which had been pinned on his coat by the King of England.

Without needless delay, Mr. Wallace gave a few crisp directions, the seats were arranged for the students, an advantageous place was chosen for the stenographer, and a small table placed in front of her. When all was ready, Mr. Fisher addressed the assembly, told them he was glad they were members of the class, and emphasized the fact that after the first few tests, any one who did not come up to qualifications, would be eliminated. He stressed the importance of a pilot's responsibility, and the necessity of every young man who applied for a li-

cense to keep himself physically and mentally fit for his job. When he introduced Mr. Wallace, the boys rose in a mass and gave a rousing cheer for the famous aviator.

"Thank you, gentlemen," Mr. Wallace bowed. "Now, we'll get right down to business." And they did.

He gave the class a brief talk, not too technical, but right to the point, and he gave them an outline of what he expected them to accomplish. Roberta got every word he said, and she was mighty glad that she had been with the company long enough so that she understood the phraseology of air-men.

As the lesson proceeded she was more and more interested, and how she did wish that her brother Harvey was one of those boys in front of her. They were certainly lucky young men, and she thought how well they looked, as if they represented the best of America's younger generation. At last the class work was finished for the day. Roberta examined some charts that had been used, to be sure she had the names correctly, then she hurried away to type the morning's

work. As she did it, she felt as if she was getting the advantage of the instructions all over again. That evening, when she went home, she rehearsed the whole thing in her mind and at dinner, she told Mother and Dad about it. They thought it was wonderful.

"Here's a letter from our air-man," Dad said later, and they read the boy's enthusiastic account of his own experiences both on his job and with the air pilot.

"Guess I'm getting the bug," he wrote them. "Don't know but that I'd rather be an air-man than an engineer."

"Being an engineer is safer," Mrs. Langwell said a bit anxiously.

"Oh, I don't know that it is, my dear. Engineers get blown up, things fall on them, or they fall and injure themselves. After all, I believe it depends upon the man how safe he is in any profession," Dad answered.

Every morning for the next three weeks Roberta took the lectures and every afternoon her deft fingers made copies of the text, which was submitted to Mr. Wallace, O.K.-ed by him, then passed over to Miss

Morris to have a number of duplicates typed. There were times when the young stenographer felt that she understood exactly what Mr. Wallace was teaching better than some of the boys who were struggling to grasp what he explained. The second week four of them had been dropped, and they were mighty disappointed fellows. Neither Phil Fisher nor Larry Kingsley were among those who could not go on, and Roberta was glad, for both of them were fine chaps, clean-cut, jolly; although they could be serious enough if need be. The girl was fascinated by the huge charts, the diagrams, instrument boards; everything. In fact she was learning them by heart. One morning she went into the Board Room early and found Larry Kingsley already there. He looked embarrassed.

"Good morning, Miss Langwell. I say, will you do me a favor, please?"

"If I can," she agreed promptly.

"I'm not color blind, but tomorrow we have that test. I've got to pass it." Roberta stiffened a bit, but she waited for him to

finish. "I wonder if you would show me the colors—I don't know the names of them—"

"You don't know the names of them?"

"Oh, I know green, of course, and red, but I'm not real sure of the others, whether I have the right names to fit the colors!"

"I see. Well, what color is your suit?"

"It's brown, sort of."

"Dark brown. Now, what color are my cuffs?" He eyed them with an anxious scowl. "They're sort of brown too."

"Tan," she corrected. Then she saw a highly colored chart on the wall and for the next half hour she drilled John Kingsley on colors and it wasn't until a chuckle sounded close by that the two realized the class had assembled and the teacher was there.

"Thank you, Miss Langwell, that is most helpful. Any more members want color drilling?"

Several did, including Phil Fisher, and to Roberta's dismay she found herself elected. She was scared stiff, but she tackled the new responsibility earnestly and soon forgot all about herself. That's how she made a dozen

good friends among the aviators to-be.

When the class moved out to the hangars, where actual planes instead of models or pictures were used in the work, of course she had to go along. Standing beside one of the fine machines, Roberta felt as if it were something wonderfully capable and alive. She sighed when she realized that she would not be taken into the air when the eleven boys began that part of their instructions. She wished heartily that another class would be started, but she knew that other plans had been made for Mr. Wallace, and he would be leaving Long Island as soon as this class took the final examination. It was mighty disappointing to have learned so much and not be able to finish, but it never occurred to her to ask permission. There were no women among the pilots of the Lurtiss company.

Then, one day she was in the factory unable to resist the lure of the instrument board. A plane went zooming into the sky like a marvelous bird, and she was filled with such a wild desire to fly, that whopping

big tears came into her eyes. She blinked them back resolutely, and just in time, for Larry Kingsley, looking like a new man in his aviation suit, came strolling up to her.

"Haven't seen you for days," he grinned, and this time he wasn't a bit embarrassed, even if she was a girl.

"I have been busy and I guess you have too. I saw your papers and they were all marked high. Congratulations."

"Thanks, I'm a great air baby. Got a top-notch license and everything, and one of these days I shall hop down to Texas and have lunch with the family. One thing we have there is plenty of landing space. Dad's ranch is a thousand acres, and I'm going to have an airdrome on it, big lights and everything."

"Are you really? Oh, that will be perfectly great. It must be wonderful to fly—my brother is learning to be a pilot, too—he's out west. I wished he could have been here for the course you took."

"Wallace is a great old boy. He surely did put us through the grill, and it's now I'm

beginning to appreciate what a whale of a lad he is. Have you ever been in a plane?"

"No I haven't." The regret in her tone was unmistakable.

"Well, it's time you were, Miss Langwell. Come right along and I'll give you a joy ride." The two hadn't noticed Mr. Trowbridge coming toward them, but he had heard what she said.

"Oh, really—"

"Really. Lend her your coat, Larry, cap and goggles. We'll see if she's air shy," her boss smiled, and Roberta was too thrilled for words. Larry Kingsley's short coat was almost as long as her dress, his sleeves had to be turned way back, and the goggles tightened, but Roberta did not mind a bit how she looked. She was going to fly; it was too gorgeous for words. They were taken out to the hangars in the runabout, and presently Roberta was safely strapped in a seat beside the pilot. Mr. Trowbridge, also decked out in flying clothes, except that his fit him, was beside her.

"Ready, sir?" the mechanic called.

"Ready," he answered.

Roberta caught her breath as the plane ran along the ground, then gasped sharply as she felt it lift into the air, its motor roaring an accompaniment to her thumping heart. They rose above the airdrome, higher than the trees, and went on, and on. Several times Mr. Trowbridge glanced at her to make sure that she was all right, and was soon satisfied that at least she was not air-shy. At first the girl just kept her eyes ahead of her, then she lifted them to the blue sky, into which they were racing, and finally she glanced down at the world below, and laughed aloud with pure delight. It was even more splendid than her wildest dream had imagined, and as a matter of fact, she almost pinched herself to make sure that she was really awake, and not indulging in a flight of fancy. They stayed up half an hour, and Roberta sighed with regret when she saw the flying field coming up to meet them, and knew that she would soon be on the ground again; that the ride would be over. When she stepped out of

the plane, Mr. Wallace was there, and he grinned broadly.

"How did you like it?"

"It's—oh, it's just marvelous."

"I knew you'd like it and wondered why these people keep you on the ground," he told her.

"Why don't you give her a lesson! Busy now?" Mr. Trowbridge asked.

"Not too busy," Mr. Wallace agreed, and then, to the girl's further bliss, he did give her a lesson. He took her up again, and as she knew all the controls, almost as well as he did himself, she was an apt pupil. "I'll give you another trial at noon tomorrow," he promised when he thought she had plenty. "Don't want to overdo a good thing."

The bus man drove her back to the office, and that night, at home, she told Dad and Mother, who listened sympathetically, but anxiously. Having a boy aviator was one thing, but trusting their girl in the air was quite another. However, they did not protest very much and they were most thankful that she could have such a thorough training. Be-

fore she went to bed, she wrote to Harvey and told him she was learning to be a Sky Pilot, and she said that in the fall, when he returned to the east, they might have a race. A few days later, a protesting wire came from the brother in the west.

"Dad. It isn't safe for the kid to be flying. Don't let her do it."

"The very idea," Roberta declared indignantly, "After I helped coax you to let him learn."

She had two more lessons with Mr. Wallace, one with Mr. Trowbridge, one with the general field instructor, then both Kingsley and young Fisher took her in hand and she felt as if she were privileged of the gods. Noons, Saturdays and holidays she practiced with some of them, so she was soon ready for a license. She could handle three kinds of planes, had been drilled for all sorts of emergencies, probable and improbable, but she didn't develop any inclination for stunting. Perhaps that was because Mother and Dad constantly urged her not to be too reckless.

IV

ROBERTA SOLOS

Of course, after Roberta had learned, and was a full fledged sky-pilot, she kept well posted on all that transpired in the air-world, and she dreamed wonderful dreams of the day when she would own her own plane. In the bank she had a slowly growing savings account which she hoped ultimately would swell to the needed amount.

On a special platform in the huge factory was a wonderful model of a new plane the firm was building. It was light and graceful and looked for all the world as if it would hop off through the high windows and go adventuring on its own. Roberta never took time off to powder her nose, but whenever she could she slipped down to the section where the plane was being assembled, and

when she let her imagination go a-soaring, she could see herself in one of those cockpits sailing through the sky.

Then came a morning when her boss needed to go to the Oranges, over in New Jersey. "How would you like to go along and bring the plane back?" he asked as if he thought she would not consider such a thing for a moment. She simply couldn't tell him *how much* she would like it, but she jumped from her desk her eyes as bright as a pair of twin stars. "I'll be obliged if you will, because the boys are busy this morning, and I am returning with friends."

"I'll be ready any time you say."

"Drop into your knickers and we'll be off," he grinned.

That's how it came about that a few hours later she was alone in the cockpit while her boss and his friends teased good naturedly.

"She looks as if she is glad to be rid of you," one said.

"You win," he answered. "All ready?"

"All ready!" She nodded and opened her

Off she started with a gentle bang, rose easily and curved as she began to gain height. Once she looked over at the field she had just left and was a little surprised to see the group of men still standing there waving. She thought they were giving her an extra send-off, so she waved back, then she noticed that they piled pell-mell into a car and went tearing away in a cloud of dust. It did not occur to Roberta that their actions had anything to do with her, so she set her course and raced happily toward home.

This was her solo flight and never was a day more beautiful for such a performance. The air was just right, the motor hummed rythmically, and the plane behaved exactly as it should. Below she saw the wide stretch of the New Jersey marshes, small towns, larger cities, and the Bay. Then she was over the river, above Manhattan, and set her nose toward the field on Long Island. Brooklyn, Forest Hills, Jamaica went by underneath then she noticed a plane coming toward her. It looked like one that belonged to the cor-

poration and she wondered if one of the pilots was planning to have a bit of sport with her. The idea gave her a scared feeling, because she had seen them do stunts to each other that had almost taken her breath away, and she did not want anyone doing loop-the-loops around her now. However, if he did, she would have to make the best of it, and after all she thought, she wasn't a very good pilot if she couldn't keep her nerve.

The plane was coming swiftly, then it zoomed above her head and Roberta lost sight of it, so she decided he was probably on business but a few minutes later she heard the engines and in another instant it dived directly into her path. She tensed every nerve and muscle at the recklessness of the act. Then she noticed two men aboard. One was standing facing her and unrolled a white strip of something which he held high. Across the face was scrawled in huge black lettering:

Don't land! Wheels gone!

Did the girl nearly faint? No, she didn't,

but a cold horror took possession of her as she realized what that meant. A wrecked plane when she came down, and perhaps a wrecked pilot! Wow! Two wows. Then she remembered that this was her solo flight and she wondered if it could be possible the pilots were planning a bit of hoax, but that did not seem logical. Airmen are a funloving lot, but they are mighty careful. She was positive none of them would tell her she had lost her landing gear if she hadn't. The man waved the sign up and down. She recognized Phil Fisher and she nodded to let him know that she understood the message. Then he pointed to the east and she saw another plane coming at racing speed. Soon she made out it was a hydroplane. She didn't have an idea why he was coming and she looked toward the leading plane for a solution. Phil kept pointing toward the other plane, which was only a short distance away, and it was making a wide sweeping half circle.

Roberta pointed to herself, then to the hydroplane. Did they want her to follow she was asking, and Phil nodded vigor-

ously. She grinned and waved as she set off, but she noticed that it was Larry Kingsley who was at the controls and that they set out to follow. She was flying straight across Long Island now, at her right, not very distant, she could see their own landing field and she wondered a bit how long it would be before she saw it again, or if she ever would. Quickly banishing such gloomy thoughts, she set about attending strictly to business, physically and mentally, and presently she caught a glimpse of Long Island Sound looking for all the world like a marvelously smooth blue mirror. On she raced until she was almost at the tail of the water plane, which also carried two men.

One of them was standing up and as she approached, he raised his arms as if he were an orchestra leader, and signalled her to keep close on their left. She obeyed. It occurred to Roberta they wanted her to land on the water and perhaps swim until they could pick her up, so she kicked off her shoes and rid herself of helmet, coat and safety belt. By this time they were nearing the

shore and the signaler motioned her to curve south with them. She followed directions to the letter and in a minute they were about a quarter of a mile from land, neck to neck.

Roberta took an instant to glance at the surface of the bay, there were few boats in sight, but soon she saw a high-powered motor boat leave its landing and scoot in a diagonal course up and out, leaving a long rolling V in its wake. Two men were in the boat and one of them kept his eyes on the plane. Perhaps they noticed she had lost her landing gear, or they might be interested just because the flyers were so low, and were watching to avoid a collision in case the hydroplane were going to land.

To the young girl who did not know what was going to happen to her within the next few minutes, it seemed as if she saw and thought of a great many things. She wondered how the two pilots had learned of her predicament. Again it flashed through her brain that they might be having a joke with her, but she dismissed the idea as absurd.

They had come some distance, following

the shore line, when she was signaled that they would begin the descent. They rose a bit, then, with noses tipped downward, her eyes on the man's hands, she shut off the motor, keeping an even keel with the hydroplane, her propellor spinning silently, with decreasing rapidity. She realized that the men had probably selected as safe a place as possible, and she could see Larry Kingsley and Phil Fisher flying above her. Phil was leaning far over and watching anxiously. She wanted to wave and re-assure them that she wasn't afraid, but she did wish the whole universe, including the two planes and time itself, were not standing still. She knew they were not, but just the same, they seemed to be, and the effect wasn't pleasant.

Drop, drop, drop—not down like a dead weight, but forward. She managed to keep a perfect balance, then she saw the water come to meet her. The propellor hit it with a splash, followed simultaneously by the bigger splash as the body hit, skidded a short distance, and sent up a sheet of water. Quickly clambering out of the cockpit, Rob-

erta stood a second and saw the second man leap from the hydroplane, which was rocking on the waves as easily as a boat.

"All right?" he shouted.

"Yes, thank you."

"Good." He held out a strong brown hand and she accepted it, then he steadied her to the other plane.

"Great work," the pilot grinned at her.

"Oh, will we lose the plane?" She could see it settling and the sight made her sick with dread.

"No, the water is shallow and my side-kick here is staying with her. That motor boat is on its way to help."

"I am so glad."

"They brought a new landing gear and she'll be in the air in no time," he explained.

"Fine." Roberta drew a deep breath of relief. This solo trip of hers had not ended so gorgeously as it had promised, but if the flying machine were lost, that would make matters infinitely worse. Her boss would never trust her with one of his planes again.

"We're off. So long," the pilot announced

and away they went. It was Roberta's first trip on a hydroplane and of course it fascinated her, but the trip was a brief one. Fifteen minutes later they landed again, this time very near the shore. They had hardly settled when a row boat came along side.

"Have you got a passenger for me," a young chap shouted. It was Larry Kingsley. Roberta blinked as she tried to understand how he happened to be there. He seemed to be everyplace that day. He grinned as he held up his hand.

"Thank you so much," Roberta said to the pilot, whose name she did not know.

"Glad to be able to do it, but don't mind telling you that I expected you to lose your nerve or get scared and make a mess of it."

"I did get scared," she admitted quickly.

"You didn't show it and that's what counts," he laughed. "Better luck next time." He was scooting away and Larry Kingsley began rowing toward the shore.

"Gosh, I'm glad you got off so easily. Some of the fellows have had bad spills," he said soberly.

"How did you know I had lost the gear?" she asked.

"It dropped while you were above the field in New Jersey. They tried to let you know, but that wouldn't have done any good. Then the boss burned up the road to the nearest telephone. He called the field and told us to be on the watch for you."

"Oh, so that was why they were all standing there. I noticed them but I thought they were giving me a send-off. Then they got into a car and it kicked up so much dust I couldn't see it again, and I came on."

"We got in touch with the water babies. Phil's fertile brain and artistic hand concocted the sign, then we went up as a reception committee of two. Sorry we didn't have a band along. Here we are." The prow of the boat touched the shore and they sprang out. A small boy was eagerly pulling on the rope.

"You got her all right?"

"Sure. How much do I owe you?"

"You don't owe me anything," the young-

ster answered promptly as if he felt that serving an air-man were a privilege.

"Anyway, I owe you a joy ride. I'll be back in this neighborhood in two hours. If your folks are willing, I'll take you up," Larry promised and the boy beamed. Roberta thought of her own first joy ride and she knew exactly how thrilled he felt.

"I'll show you the path up the cliff," he volunteered.

"Thanks again." They followed the rough winding trail to the top of the bluff. They were at the edge of a small meadow and a few rods away the plane was poised with Phil on guard.

"Hop in. Kind of tight squeeze, but I guess you won't mind," he greeted her cheerfully.

"You were dandy to come and help me."

"If you hadn't kept your head it would have been a grand slam," he answered, then added, "We have to hustle. The boss is waiting."

It wasn't long before their own landing field was in sight and Roberta drew a thank-

ful breath as she saw it mount to meet them. She recalled her last sight of it, and the despairing ideas that were crowding into her mind as she cut across to the Sound.

"Home at last." She hopped out and there was the boss, besides several heads of the corporation. Roberta was sure this solo trip would be her last with one of their planes, but there was a wide smile on Mr. Trowbridge's face as he stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Congratulations, Miss Langwell. You did remarkably well and I—that is, we are glad that you were not hurt," he said warmly.

"I'm not, a bit," she assured him. Then she had to shake hands with each of them, and not one seemed a bit put out. "I'm sorry —" she started to say, but she was interrupted.

"You couldn't help it, but the mechanic who inspected the machine should have examined it carefully. It might be that something snapped. We can tell better when we go over the parts." Just then a familiar roar filled the air and she saw a plane coming

from the direction of the Sound. It was the one she had used, with the new gear intact. Roberta wanted to squeal for joy at the sight of it, but she remained outwardly calm as the strange pilot made a perfect three point landing.

"By the way," the boss said. "I suppose you are through flying—had enough to last you the rest of your life!"

"Through," she protested quickly. "Why, I've only started." He laughed heartily, and they all joined him.

"All right then. Our class instructor wants to make some observation trips and he'd like a stenographer pilot. He begins tomorrow. Interested?"

"Certainly," she giggled. She couldn't help it.

"Then that's settled. We'll have to get a new office stenographer, and put you on the pilot's pay roll. They get higher salary."

And that's how Roberta Langwell became an aviatrix for the Lurtiss Airplane Co., Inc. They gave her the afternoon off and she

got home as fast as the company's automobile could take her, which was rather slow, and told her mother the wonderful news. They did a tango around the kitchen, then went to the talkies to celebrate.

V

FLYING BLIND

The plane selected for the tour was a two-passenger and Mrs. Wallace was to take the trip. She was a jolly sort of somebody, quite "crazy" about air traveling, but hopelessly unambitious to manage the controls herself. Just before the take-off Mr. Trowbridge gave his former secretary some parting instructions.

"No doubt, Miss Langwell, Bob Wallace will want to occupy the cockpit occasionally, but you will have to do the greater part of the piloting yourself. He was hurt in France, and while his recovery was remarkable, during the past few months, the old injury to his arm bothers him at times; is very painful."

"What a shame," Roberta said sympathetically.

"Only his most intimate friends know it, for he isn't given to making much of his troubles, big or little. The telephone connection will be valuable; he can give you advice as well as tell you what he wants at any time while you are flying. Be sure to listen to the radio weather reports. If anything really goes wrong, Bob can climb back to make any adjustment you are not able to manage, and don't hesitate to let him know promptly."

"I won't," the girl promised very earnestly.

"That's the idea. Also, any day that you do not feel equal to piloting, tell him, and he'll either do it himself or pick up someone else. It's important that you should always be fit," her boss explained.

"I'll remember," she answered.

"Now, I do not mind telling you that your going on this trip has a great advertising value for the Curtiss Company. We have a reputation for having turned out, not only

good planes, but some of the best flyers in the country. Having an A-One girl sky-pilot in our service will promote the interest of women. We did not think of that when you started to learn, but we can see that it is a big advantage."

"Then it is up to me to be doubly careful," Roberta said, and the man smiled so pleasantly that she almost wished she were back at his desk taking his letters and being his secretary.

"I know that you will. Don't forget to examine your radio before each flight, and mark every new light you find on your map. It is as up-to-date as we can make it, but there may be some which have not been reported to us, and new ones are being installed every week. I'll say good luck to you now." He held out his hand and the girl took it firmly.

"Thank you very much Mr. Trowbridge. You have been kind to help me become a flier—"

"A girl sky-pilot," he laughed. "I do not mind telling you that I never really expected

to keep you chained to my office; you have too much ability for mere stenography. We'd better go along." They hurried out of the building, took the bus to the hangars, and were soon in the midst of a good-natured crowd that had gathered to see them off. Of course there was much hand-shaking, good wishes, and parting injunctions.

"If you should happen to land on Mars leave them a copy of Wallace's instructions for fliers," Phil Fisher advised solemnly.

"If your engine gets over-heated, hop down to Little America and ask Byrd to lend you a cake of ice," Larry Kingsley put in.

"If you lads are through kidding Miss Langwell, we'll start," Mr. Wallace told them.

"Guess we've given her all the help she needs," Phil grinned.

The three took their places without further ado and a moment later the engine bellowed, the propeller blade whirled until it looked like a solid wheel, the plane ran down the field, lifted and they were in the air,

which was clear and beautiful. Roberta circled, zoomed high, then leveled off and set her course for the first stop, which was in Pennsylvania. Two hours later they dropped down into a delegation of citizens, who gave them a cordial welcome, and immediately escorted them to the biggest hotel in the place, where a mass meeting was held. Mr. Wallace addressed the assembly, and when he finished his speech, he was heartily cheered. Then there was a luncheon given by prominent men of the community who were especially interested in the development of the amazing new industry. Dozens of questions were asked, suggestions offered, and a proposed landing site visited. Mr. Wallace made suggestions regarding what would be required, and after leaving plans, blue prints, and copious notes, the three were on their way again.

So the days passed and each one was full of so much interest that Roberta got more and more enthusiastic over the work they were doing. Once they stopped at a huge country fair. To be sure women fliers were up.

not unknown, some of them had accomplished marvelous feats, but the young sky-pilot found herself the centre of attraction. She heard all sorts of odd remarks passed, as if the commentors thought she was deaf, or some queer specie.

"I feel like a monkey in the zoo," she told Mrs. Wallace, who chuckled heartily.

"You will soon get over minding being stared at, my dear," she whispered consolingly, and she was right.

Roberta was so thoroughly in earnest about what she was doing that she forgot to be self-conscious, and would plunge into a discussion with as much zest as Mr. Wallace himself. Every day he made notes, which had to be transcribed later on her portable typewriter, one copy mailed back and the other kept for reference. The trip extended leisurely and in a zig-zag course across the country, and while they were en route, an urgent invitation came from Montreal. Mr. Wallace promised to include that, and some other Canadian cities in the itinerary.

"My dear, we'll never get home," Mrs. Wallace declared one evening as she glanced over the growing list of stops scheduled.

"Aren't we at home in the air?" her husband laughed.

"Yes, we are," she told him, and she was right. When they could, they ate their meals in the plane. Sometimes they would come down to a particularly delightful spot where they would have a picnic. The food seemed much more tasty than any served in hotels or restaurants. Twice they made a camp near a stream and Mr. Wallace caught trout for their dinner, and Mrs. Wallace cooked it.

"Oh, this is delicious," Roberta declared as they sat around the fire and ate the meal.

"I like people immensely, but I do appreciate getting away from crowds sometimes," Mrs. Wallace announced as she bit into a piece of toast she had made with the aid of a sharpened stick.

Besides the task before them, they did manage to have no end of fun by themselves. Three times they were delayed to have the

machine overhauled. Then they hired a car and went sight-seeing, and while Roberta was intensely interested in the close-to views of places, she loved seeing the great panorama from the sky. One afternoon, when they were making rather a longer hop than usual, a fog arose. Presently they were right in the thick of it, but since that part of the country was fairly open, Roberta went steadily ahead, not at all alarmed. The instruments were before her eyes keeping her informed on everything she wanted to know, but after an hour had passed, and there was no sign of its being dispelled, she decided to get above it if possible. She zoomed high, up, up, in an effort to go through the ceiling. She watched tensely for a hole, but she might as well have looked for one in a brand new battle ship. There wasn't a crack.

"Better land, if you can," Mr. Wallace advised through the phone.

"All right," she answered calmly. She did some calculating as to their whereabouts, and as near as she could figure, according to the course and the number of miles they

had covered, they must have reached a wooded, hilly stretch of country. She searched the map but there wasn't an open space marked for miles. Once again she climbed through the enveloping fog, five thousand feet, six, seven, eight, still no rift in the dark wall. It was an uncanny experience. She could not even see the front of the plane, and only a little of the wings as it roared ahead.

"My husband is in pain, Miss Langwell. Land as soon as you can, please," Mrs. Wallace had taken the transmitter, and the words sent a cold shiver down the girl's back.

"I will," she promised earnestly, but she wondered frantically how and where she would do it. She turned the plane's nose down and began to drop swiftly. Lower and lower they went, until she dared descend no further without knowing something about the landscape beneath them. Leveling out she shot forward, her eyes straining for an opening or some indication of what was below them, but for minutes she caught no

sign. She wondered how ill Mr. Wallace was, if he had fainted, or what, but the two in front said not a word to relieve her anxiety. She went lower, then suddenly she caught a glimpse of tree tops dangerously near, and shoving the stick forward, she shot out of harm's way as best she could. Minutes passed, then a breeze cut a furrow through the fog bank and the girl saw a narrow, clear spot, and a very faint light that might have gleamed from some open door. It was gone almost as soon as it appeared through the swirling fog, but Roberta had started toward it, shut-off the motor and dived. The plane lighted, rolled a short distance without striking an obstacle, and with a prayer of thankfulness, she realized they had made a safe landing. She opened the door quickly and went to the passengers.

"Well done," Mr. Wallace smiled. His face was drawn, but he was making a courageous attempt to hide his suffering.

"Are you all right? I don't know where we are," Roberta said breathlessly. She was

relieved to find that he wasn't stretched out on the floor.

"I am glad to be down where I can do something to make him comfortable," Mrs. Wallace said quickly, and the girl opened the door.

"Who be you?" A tall, lanky man came and poked his face close to them, and Roberta jumped. "What you feard of?" He held a dim lantern above his head and its faint glow made a fantastic effect in the fog.

"We are aviators," Mr. Wallace told them, and proceeded to introduce himself and his companions.

"Do tell. Ma she figured it was air-folk. Come in en set. This fog's thick as a gum shoe. I'm Walt Perkins givin' you welcome."

"Thank you very much," Mrs. Wallace responded heartily. "My husband has not been feeling well. His arm is bothering him. We shall be glad to go in where it is dry and warm."

"We'll be right glad to have you. You wore havin' a spell of luck when you picked my clearin', in these hills—"

"Pa, you tell them folks to come right in and set. Supper'll be ready in no time. 'Taint every day we have air-folks drop in to see us." This was Ma Perkins, who was short and plump, with mild blue eyes and soft white hair parted in the middle and smoothed over her ears. She wore a "light wash dress" and it's full skirt stood out like a half balloon about her as she came to inspect the new arrivals. "Did you say someone's sick?"

"It's nothing serious, Mrs. Perkins," Mr. Wallace hastened to assure her. He and his wife were out of the plane, and Mrs. Wallace was busily collecting the things she wanted to take inside.

"I'm hopin' you stay so I kin see your airyplane come daylight," Pa told them as the party made its way to the long log cabin from whose open door, the girl sky-pilot had caught a glimpse of the friendly light.

"You must be most starved," Ma declared. "When you eat you'll be feelin' better."

"We have plenty with us—"

"Now, don't act ill about supper, we got

'nough to go round. Maybe 'taint so fancy as some but I took the prize at the county fair for my pies and jells too."

The fliers were ushered into the tiny home which was neat as a pin, and mighty cheerful looking to the three who had been driving at top speed through heavy blackness. There were bright hand-made rugs on the floor, some family portraits and a picture of Charles Lindbergh on the wall, a deep fireplace at one side, and a shiny stove at the other. The pleasant odors of the evening meal greeted the nostrils appetizingly. The guests' apparel created a great deal of interest on the part of the Perkins', and presently the family and tourists were seated around the table. They were soon willing to vouch for the worthiness of Mrs. Perkins' cooking. It certainly deserved all the prizes that could be offered.

"Have some pie," Ma urged as Mr. Wallace swallowed his last bite.

"I had two helpings," he reminded her. "For a sick man, I think I have done amazingly well."

"Land sakes alive, two pieces ain't nothin' 'tall. Pa never stops lessen he has five, en sometimes he'll eat a hull pie."

"Course. You mustn't act like company, just make yourselves to home and eat all you want. Ma likes to cook," Pa urged.

"But I simply can't eat any more," Mr. Wallace laughed.

"Maybe he's fearin' he'll get too hefty, being an air-flying man," Pa suggested, and so they stopped insisting. Then, while the two men smoked outside the door, Ma cleared up," refusing to permit either Mrs. Wallace or Roberta to help her.

"You just set. Fooling round with kitchen things you might spill something on your pants. They do look real handy. Sometimes I put on a pair of overalls when I'm working around the garden, but Pa likes me to be dressed up for meals."

"After all, I think women really like dresses best, but it would not be safe to wear them in airplanes," Mrs. Wallace explained.

"I suppose not. Guess your man is better. Was he took faint?"

"He hurt his arm years ago, and lately it has been bothering him. I think the dampness started it up today. The fog was heavy and cold."

"Ain't that too bad. I got some liniment you can use on him. My son's got a job with a big company that is making a dam. They figure to put water where the Lord didn't leave any. Sometimes I think maybe 'tain't for men to go against the Lord that way, but Amy says the Lord is willing for water to go any place a man can get it. He's writin' they got two airyplanes where he's working, and the flying men's real interesting. Right friendly chap. He gave Amy a ride," Ma chatted sociably.

"Is that so?" Roberta was immediately interested in Amy. "I wonder if he's with the same company where my brother is working. His name is Harvey, he's studying engineering, and he wrote that he has been learning to fly in the company's planes."

"Do tell. Mebbe 'tis. Wait a minute." Ma opened a drawer in her work table and produced a small package of letters. "These is

from Amy," she smiled tenderly as she removed a piece of pink string from the package. One of the letters was enclosed in the company's envelope, and Roberta laughed.

"It's the very same firm," she declared and Ma looked upon her with renewed interest.

"Do tell, now ain't that nice! Kind of like being kin, you are to us. Amy en your brother bein' working in the same place, and you drop out of the sky, just a cuttin' through the fog, en landin' in our front yard on the plat." They understood that she meant plateau, for by that time they realized that in trying to get out of the dense blanket which had enfolded them so dangerously, they had gone far out of their course and had made a landing in a mountainous section. There was no telling how they would get off in the morning, but there was nothing to do but wait for daylight.

"We are lucky to have found your front yard," Mrs. Wallace said thankfully, and Ma nodded wisely.

"I reckon the Lord was watchin' you, en

having his angels kind of see that you didn't go into the canyon. It's right near, en a stretch down to the river. Tain't much of a river, cept when it's all swelled up, like it is now. Never saw so much water pounding gainst them rocks, en I ben livin' here since me en Pa got hitched up together. We had six children here, en two of 'em sleepin' on the hill. It's a real nice grove of cedar, en a branch of the creek runs by—like 'still waters,' it is, en peaceful. Amy's the baby, en he was fer settin' out fer an engineer. Seem's if living so long, kind of growing up among granite rocks made him get a cravin' to do thngs to 'em. Sarah, she's the next one, I got a picture of her en her husband and the babies, she is livin' in Denver; then there's John en Paul, the twins. Never was such a pesky pair of young ones to bring up. Seems like two brains could think up more foolishness. They got a shop, kind of big place, out to Seattle. Married sisters, and I reckon they're sort of necessary to each other. Wouldn't neither of 'em do anything

without the other, and together they do right well."

"You have a nice family," Mrs. Wallace remarked.

"They're good young ones. All of 'em wantin' us to live with 'em but we kind of have a hankerin' fer this place, and we sure ain't needin' anything, 'cause they send money regular. Pa puts it in the bank mostly, and we got clear land 'nough to raise a garden, you'll see it come light. Flowers, I got a lot of pretty ones, and Sarah, she's always sending readin' things." Ma spoke softly, without undue pride regarding the children, and went on with a nod. "Some folks ain't got so much comfort with their children, seems like. Pa he's saying the strength en firmness of the rocks hereabouts was in their bones, and I'm believin' the Lord kind of helped bring 'em up. He could see this wasn't much of a place, en me en Pa didn't have a lot to do with."

"Land sakes, Ma, you do go on," Mr. Perkins entered with Mr. Wallace and smiled

apologetically to the guests. "We're kind of alone, and I guess Ma's feelin' glad to have some one to talk to."

"I have enjoyed hearing her, and we have discovered that my brother is working for the same construction company your son is with, and—"

"Do tell, is that so, now," Pa interrupted. "Amy's doing fair to middlin' out there. Air you aimin' to pay him a visit?"

"We'll be within seventy miles of the construction camp, Miss Langwell. Unless something very unforeseen comes up, you can arrange to pay your brother a visit," Mr. Wallace put in quickly.

"That will be wonderful," Roberta declared enthusiastically. "It will be fun to hop down and give him a surprise. He did not want me to take up flying; wired Dad to have me stop."

"Selfish young brute." But Roberta immediately came to her brother's defence.

"He was afraid I'd get hurt."

"To be sure, but Bob couldn't resist teas-

ing you. Roberta, don't pay any attention to him," Mrs. Wallace advised.

"I'll remember the next time."

"We be sort of early birds here abouts," Pa remarked as he tried to smother a prodigious yawn.

"Yes, it's past our bed time," Ma Perkins told them complacently. "You can have that room—"

"But we do not want to deprive you of your room," Mrs. Wallace protested quickly.

"You ain't. The twins built on three rooms so the families could visit us, all of 'em at once if they liked," Ma explained.

"Maybe they won't like feather beds, but it's a kind of raw night, and if you're bothered with rumetiz, the feathers is good for you," Pa supplemented.

"You just fix things so's you sleep comfortable. Here's the liniment." Ma produced a huge jug of some home-made concoction, and led the way to the end of the living room, and showed the guests to their quarters.

The rooms were neat, in apple-pie order,

with four-poster beds and comforters gay and ancient enough to gladden the heart of any collector. The two ladies of the party eyed them with keen appreciation, and half an hour later, after washing up in the lantern light at a bench outside the door, Roberta tucked herself in and wished that her mother could meet the Perkins family. When the girl awoke the next morning, the sun was just rolling over the edge of the horizon. She sat up to look out of the window, and as her eyes took in the nature of the country about them, she gasped for breath and wondered how she had been fortunate enough to pick out the only available spot for a landing. She could see the plane resting just a few feet away from a high rocky ledge, and from her post of observation, the whole plateau seemed to be covered with heavy tall timber.

"How will we ever get off?" she whistled.

The same question must have disturbed Mr. Wallace, for just then he appeared beside the machine, and stood looking around with a calculating eye. Mr. Perkins joined

him and the pair seemed to confer. From the kitchen-livingroom came the fragrance of breakfast, so Roberta jumped up and dressed quickly. As she was going out, she met Mrs. Wallace.

"Good morning. My husband tells me that we landed by the skin of our teeth," she said in greeting.

"Does look like it. How is he?"

"He had a fairly good night, and his arm doesn't hurt so long as he isn't using it. He's had these spells before and sometimes they last longer than others."

"I hope this is a short spell." The two went outside together and then they could see that the plane had landed on a slightly curved incline.

"My hat's off to you, Miss Langwell. You did a marvelous piece of piloting last night," Mr. Wallace greeted her.

"But I was fog blinded, really. I barely caught a glimpse of this clearing, and the light from the doorway."

"Well, you got us on it, and that's the

main thing," he told her, but he made no comment about getting off.

"Come folks, breakfast is all ready," Ma called.

VI

THE SURPRISE VISIT

Breakfast at the Perkins certainly was substantial, and while it was in progress the party discussed this, that and the other. The city people were delighted with their host and hostess, who, to use their own expression, put on no "airs" but were just plain folks.

"If you see your brother, like as not you'll see our Amy," Ma said.

"I'll make a point of seeing him if I can," Roberta promised.

"That's real neighborly." Ma smiled her appreciation. "He'll be surprised when you tell him you stopped here." By that time the meal was finished, and Mr. Wallace asked how much they owed their hosts.

"Land a goodness, you don't owe us noth-

in' 'tall. 'Twas right nice havin' you drop in. Like as not Ma'd never see an airyplane close to, if you hadn't. We don't have much company up here."

"Summertime neighbors is too busy plantin' and harvestin', and winters the roads is too bad," Ma explained.

"Well, thank you very much for taking us in. It would have been very uncomfortable sleeping out of doors last night," Mrs. Wallace said quickly, for she realized that the old couple really did not want to be paid for their hospitality.

"You're real welcome. I put some of that liniment in a little bottle so you can take it along with you, but you better use some before you start," Ma insisted, and she produced an extract bottle which she had filled to the brim.

"You are most kind—"

"I am sure that I do not need another application now," Mr. Wallace tried to object, but it was no use, his arm had to be rubbed, and when Roberta saw that it was the right one, she gave up even the slightest idea that

he take the controls until they were out of the dangerous section.

"How long has it bothered you?" she asked.

"It started day before yesterday, Roberta, but he would not let me tell you," Mrs. Wallace answered, and her husband scowled. "He was in such pain last evening that I finally took the transmitter and let you know."

"I am glad you did."

"He was going to crawl back to help you, but I put my foot down on that quickly—"

"It was tuning up lively about that time," Mr. Wallace admitted ruefully. "I didn't want you to think you were piloting a hospital."

"I should have thought I was piloting a crazy man if you had crawled over when you were suffering. Now, I'll go out and have a look at things."

Roberta smiled her cheerfulest, but when she was outside, her face became thoughtful as she made her way to the machine. She looked it over critically. In landing the night before, not a wire had been severed, which

was a comfort, and there wasn't the tiniest break in the wings. She got Pa Perkins to help her move the plane and turn it so that she could have every advantage of the limited space. She did wish that she was a sky-pilot of several year's experience in all sorts of emergencies, instead of having had only a few hazardous trials or serious problems to face. Also, she wished heartily that she were alone.

Fortunately their plans were so elastic that the night's delay was not serious and no one would be waiting for their immediate appearance, but she knew that in one way or another, the Lurtiss headquarters had kept in touch with them, and wondered if their non-arrival at their destination had caused any uneasiness. Finally she was ready, and the Wallaces came out, the man's arm swathed in bandages and smelling of a liberal application of the remedy, whatever it was.

"Didn't get so decorated in the war," he grinned. His eyes met Roberta's, but as far as he could tell, she was perfectly self-pos-

sessed. She didn't show a trace of the anxiety that she felt.

"I'm going to try to run along last night's tracks, and curve there." She nodded toward a huge stump precariously near the path they must take. Mr. Wallace nodded approval. He too looked over the instruments and controls.

"It's shipshape. Wish I wasn't so incapacitated and could relieve you, but I'm sure that you will make it," he said encouragingly. "My wife realizes that getting into the air isn't going to be a sinecure, but I've kept her busy thinking about my arm. Worried?"

"Some," Roberta admitted honestly. Just then Mrs. Wallace and Ma Perkins joined them and the three took their places. The tall mountaineer gave the propeller a whirl, the engine started, and worked like a charm.

"Everything's in our favor." Mr. Wallace spoke casually through the telephone, because by that time the noise was too great for conversation. "Open her up and let her go."

"Here goes." With every nerve and muscle

on the alert, Roberta opened her up, jammed the stick, and the plane started, swiftly followed the tracks of the night before, swerved so the tip of her wing barely grazed the huge stump, thundered forward toward a wall of enormous pines, lifted gently, then zoomed like a great bird. Up, up, up over their tops. Beyond them the canyon wall rose precipitously, and Roberta curved to escape it, up, up, up again, then west, until at last they had left all evidence of danger below.

"Good work," Mr. Wallace spoke in her ear. "All right?"

"Top hole," she answered.

As they soared along through the sky, Roberta began to sing, just to relieve her feelings. If she had gone through such a strain on land, probably she would have cried, because she was a girl; but being a pilot and in the air is different, so she burst into song and it was really more comforting than a deluge of tears would have been. She thought of the birds flying every day wherever they wanted to go, and she felt that now she understood why they sang.

Having gained altitude, she consulted her charts and maps, then set her course and made for the next stop at high speed. They were due at a luncheon that afternoon, and Mr. Wallace was expected to attend a conference at eleven o'clock. If they reached the town early enough, he might have time to consult a physician and have something done for his arm.

The plane went roaring high over the mountainous section, and occasionally the young girl at the controls caught a glimpse of delightful valleys, winding rivers, ranches and small towns. It was wonderful to see the world from such an elevated position. She watched her maps to note the names of the places, and marked her course for future references.

"I wish this plane had a name," she remarked once, then added. "When my ship comes in and I have one of my own, it shall have a name instead of a number, I am sure it will like that better." She glanced into the sky, a bank of fluffy white clouds was gathering lazily, and further west she could

see a long streak of smoky ones moving more swiftly across the horizon. They gathered in wee patches, the biggest sailing forward and picking them up. A few minutes later, she got the weather report over her radio and learned that a storm was predicted for the very vicinity in which they expected to be flying in a few hours.

"Hope we are down before it strikes," she said, vividly recalling the harrowing experience of the night before.

She realized that in the course of her career she would have to face numerous nerve-racking experiences, make swift decisions—with only a fraction of time in her favor, but she fervently hoped that they would not come too close together. She was fortunate making this tour with Mr. Wallace to help and advise, and by the time the party finally returned to the Lurtiss Field she would be a pretty seasoned flier. In the distance the black cloud was gathering with noticeable speed, so Roberta put on more speed in an effort to reach their destination before the storm broke. The next stop was a little town

to the south of Denver called Graniteville, and it's name sounded as if its location was not in a very soft part of the world. At ten o'clock she spied the place some miles ahead.

"That's our town," Mr. Wallace telephoned.

"Thank you."

"You'll see a row of white flags where we are to make a landing," he added, and the girl pilot's eyes swiftly searched for the spot. Two minutes later she had located the banners fluttering conspicuously, and as she came lower, she could see quite a number of persons gathered to welcome them. Soon they had made a perfect landing, and when introductions were over, one of the reception committee announced;

"We thought that you might like to have some one go over your machine while you are here, and see that it is in good order. The men we have are the best in the service."

"That's splendid. We had rather a difficult landing last night, and it will be just as well to make doubly sure that our bus in O.K." Mr. Wallace accepted, and a moment later

the plane was wheeled to a small, very new hangar, by a pair of very efficient looking young mechanics.

"You arrived just in time to avoid a storm," one of the committee remarked, and at that moment a brisk gust of wind picked up the dust and whirled it in a spiral like a tiny cyclone.

"Good thing to be out of the air right now," Roberta acknowledged as she watched the trees begin to twist and moan.

The party made its way to the appointed place where the great subject of the day was discussed, the girl took notes, and Mr. Wallace answered numerous questions. Then came the luncheon, which was a jolly affair and business was dropped for the time being. Some one offered to take them sightseeing, but a flash of lightning and pelting rain against the windows brought a hearty laugh at the proposal.

"We've been so absorbed and interested we haven't noticed the weather, but it has not been idle."

As there was nothing further for Roberta

to do at the meeting she excused herself and went to her room, where her portable typewriter was waiting beside her suit case, and soon she was busy transcribing the notes, as well as compiling her own part of the tour. That done, she devoted herself to her diary, which she had started the day Mr. Trowbridge gave her the first joy-ride. Then she wrote letters, and that evening at dinner, Mr. Wallace made a happy announcement.

"I went to the doctor this afternoon, and he insists upon a rest, so we shall be here about three days. I'm not sorry to be on the ground in this weather, but tomorrow may be clear and if you like, Miss Langwell, you may take the plane and pay your brother a visit."

"Thank you so much, I shall be glad to do that."

"You can wire from here that you are coming, weather permitting. You are a fine little pilot, but I'd rather you didn't go unless the weather is reasonably good. I should not dare to return to the Lurtiss field without you." Roberta laughed.

"I might see if I can reach Harv by telephone," she answered, then added. "But I guess it will be more fun to surprise him."

That is what she decided to do, so, when she got ready for bed she was chuckling at herself as she pictured the amazement of her brother when she dropped in on him unannounced. It had been days since she had looked at a newspaper so she did not know if the Wallace Tour was getting any publicity, or whether her own connection with it was generally known. Isolated as he must be, Harvey would rarely see papers, so even if there were stories of progress, he might easily miss them. She hoped he had, because it would be jolly to give him a complete surprise. Since they had started, letters to Mother and Dad were all she had been able to achieve, and Mother had hardly had time to let him know what she was doing.

In bed she listened to the storm which was raging furiously, and into her mind came accounts of fliers "gone fog blind" and brought ruthlessly down by the gales. She remembered one man whose plane had been

shattered against the rocks. It had been days before he was located. It wasn't a very pleasant thought, so she resolutely put it out of her mind, and began calling up happy events in her short life. At last she drifted off to sleep, and when she awoke the next morning, the sun was not shining, but the weather was clearing. At breakfast Mr. Wallace told her that the radio reports were favorable for the day, so he had requested that the plane be made ready for her.

"Thank you. How is your arm?"

"It raised some ruction in the night, but it's much easier this morning. A quiet day will see me rid of the difficulty, and we can start on our way bright and early in the morning."

"If it is bright," his wife reminded him.

"If it isn't. We really can not stay any longer because I had a wire last night and the firm has made arrangement for an extra stop. Make the best of your day, Miss Langwell. I trust the brother is duly impressed with the ability of his young sister."

"He'll probably scold about it," she laughed.

"I was a big brother myself once, and I know they feel it is their duty to young sisters, so remember it is only because he thinks so much of you, and not because he likes being grouchy."

"That's a good thing for me to bear in mind. I'll hurry and get started. Thank you so much." Soon she was being taxied to the hangar, where she found the mechanics wheeling the machine out for her.

"It's all ready, Miss Langwell."

"Thank you, that's fine." She made a few professional inquiries, took her place in the cockpit, and was off. Her eyes danced as she thought of the meeting with her brother, and for the first time she felt that the plane was a bit slow, although it was roaring along considerably above express-train speed. When one has not seen one's only brother for months, that does not seem so fast.

Although the morning had started with some scattered clouds that acted as if uncertain whether to come together for an-

other grand slam at the world, as Roberta sailed along the sun suddenly split with determined warmth through the truants and scattered them before it like impudent children caught contemplating mischief. Beneath the girl the earth looked clean and sparkling after its bath, and from the distant trees drops of moisture glistened like brilliant jewels that hung in festoons from the leaves and branches, while over her head a panorama of gay coloring streaked the heavens. Roberta could not have asked for a more beautiful day. She thrilled with happiness, but she never for an instant forgot to be alert to every pulse of the great bird which responded to her touch as if it were keenly aware of her mastership. Because of the rugged nature of the country she maintained a high altitude, and occasionally zoomed up and up just for the joy of being alone amid such splendor.

At last she knew that she was nearing the construction company's camp, so she began to descend, all the while scanning the ground ahead in search of the place where her

brother worked as a student engineer. Finally she made out the huge project in the distance. A great hole in the earth about which a wall was growing, and a little further on was a tiny lake and two small streams which were to be confined behind the dam and distributed over an arid section some miles away. She could see long lines of ant-like things bustling hither and yon and she knew they were men at work. A shrill whistle sounded even above the roar of her engine, and it seemed as if it were a signal, for the workmen immediately hurried in a different formation. Then at her right and going east, she saw another plane and decided it must be one of those in which Harvey had been learning to fly. The machine was soaring surprisingly low and slow. She thought perhaps the pilot was having trouble, and turned the nose of her own machine toward him. Twice the plane circled, then, apparently not aware of the approach of help, if it was needed, it zoomed up into the air, leveled out, and shot on as hard as it could go.

"Well, I can't make out what he was doing, but he certainly isn't in any difficulty," she remarked, and proceeded back to her course. It was no task at all to see the landing table, which looked as if it had to be dug and smoothed from the rough surface of the ground. Assuring herself that no other plane was near or contemplating a landing, she dived down, the wheels hit the ground, she shot forward and at last came to a stop. Before she could remove her goggles or open the door, two men came hurrying toward her, and although she did not notice it at once, their faces wore very serious expressions.

"You sure made great time getting here," one of them told her, and Roberta looked at him in surprise as she shoved her cap back. They seemed to expect her and she was sorry if the grand surprise she had planned had been spoiled.

"Had no idea anyone could make it so soon," the other added.

"How did you know that I was coming?"

she asked as she stepped out of the cockpit, then the men looked their amazement.

"It's a girl," the first one gasped.

"Yes. I came to give my brother a surprise visit," she laughed, "But somebody must have given it away."

"My name's Lonford, Miss. In charge of the works, and this chap is Logan, my assistant.

"How do you do." Roberta nodded. "My name is Langwell. I came to see my brother. I hope he isn't far away."

"Your b-brother!" Logan repeated faintly.

"Yes. We are on tour and had to wait over at Graniteville, so I got a day off to make the trip. Tomorrow we are going on to the coast," she explained with a gay smile. With a helpless gesture, Lonford held out his hand.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Langwell—er—"

"Er, me too," Logan added to cover the awkward pause. "You didn't, that is, I mean, you were not sent?"

"No, unless you call being given a holiday

being sent," she answered. "Is my brother working near-by?"

"Well, er—you see, Miss. I'll be gosh hang —beg pardon, Miss Langwell. We don't see many lady pilots in these parts." Roberta chuckled.

"Harvey has written so often about this work, and how much will be accomplished when it is finished. I hope I may have a good look at it while I am here." The three had started toward the cluster of buildings a short distance away, and Roberta attributed the strange behavior of the men to surprise at her sex and unexpected arrival. "It this where—"

"Oh, Logan, there isn't a trace of Langwell near that—"

"Hey you, shut-up, can't you!" Logan thundered with what seemed like needless roughness. The messenger dived back into the office as hard as he could go. For a moment Roberta did not comprehend his words, then they seemed to flash again into her mind, and she realized that the clerk had spoken about Harvey. "There isn't a trace of

Langwell—" A cold fear clutched at her heart and she stopped short in the middle of a step. Facing the superintendent, she asked evenly.

"Has something happened to my brother?"

"Well, er, we ain't saying that, Miss. You see he went for a joy-ride and he ain't showed up yet, but great guns, you ought to see Harv handle that bus! Does it like an old-timer. Couldn't nothing happen to him, he's the carefulest man in the whole outfit," Logan fairly chattered.

"When did he go?" Roberta asked, and Logan clenched his fists. "Please tell me the truth, I've got to know!"

"All right, Miss Langwell. There's no use stalling. It did give us a turn having you arrive this morning. We haven't any excess wits under the best of conditions—" Lonford started to explain.

"When did Harvey go?" she pleaded.

"He's been learning to fly. Fact is, we were anxious to have him become a pilot so he could help out in case of emergency. He

and young Voorhees were learning. Your brother did much better than his pal, but it seems your father insisted that the boy should be as near the A-One class as he could get. Before they would issue him a license he required a stipulated number of hours solo work."

"I understand that." Roberta tried to smile. There was not much they could tell her about the requirements of pilots, but she persisted in her question. "When did he go up?"

"Day before yesterday, after supper," Lonford told her. She bit her lip to keep back a startled cry of pain.

"It stormed here that night?" Well she remembered the dense fog that had nearly brought her down to disaster.

"Yes. It hit things up pretty lively. Weather looked all right when he started. I've sent men and messages all around this part of the country, and our pilots have been looking. We didn't want to start a needless alarm because your brother is a conscientious lad in everything he does, and we were

not actually worried until this morning. Homes are few and far apart around here, almost as scarce as hen's teeth. We thought he might have made a landing, found shelter for the night, and perhaps had to walk a good many miles. The clerk just reported that the last rider came in without finding any trace of the boy. Sorry it was sprung on you like that."

"Did you report the plane missing?"

"The pilots did last night, and we got men beating around through the forests. He's sure to be somewhere this side of that ledge. Our regular pilot, the lad who has been instructing your brother, told him not to go further west until he has his license. We know that Harvey would follow instructions to the letter," Lonford told her.

"As I flew over I noticed there are a few houses around here."

"Half of them are empty shacks put up for hunting men, but our men have patroled them all, and there is no sign of his landing, or taking refuge near any of them."

"You had better come to the office and sit

down, Miss Langwell. We're sure to get word soon," Logan urged, but Roberta turned about and started back to the plane, the two men following.

"I'm going to look for my brother," she announced dully. "Have you any sort of first aid kit, and a water bottle?"

"Sure, Miss." Logan raced off to get them, and by the time the girl had reached her machine, the man returned with the bottle and case.

"There is one plane at Graniteville, Mr. Lonford, and perhaps more than that. If you will telephone them, I am sure they will send additional help, and with several airplanes it ought not to be hard to locate my brother."

"Of course not. I'll telephone them right away," Lonford promised. Just as Roberta climbed into the plane, some one called Logan, so he hurried away. Lonford helped the girl as well as he could while she made sure everything was in good order and that she had the things she needed. She took her place and nodded to the man who was watch-

ing her with anxious eyes. Her hands were cold as they touched the instruments, but her mind was alert. She thought sadly of all the happy anticipation of her trip to the camp to surprise her brother, and now she wondered dully if she would ever see him again.

VII

ANXIOUS HOURS

"If we get any word, we'll send a smoke signal from the ledge. Have you any matches?" Lonford asked as Roberta was ready to start on her hunt for her brother.

"Yes, I have, thank you."

"Build a fire if you come down and locate him, but be very careful it doesn't spread," he warned.

"I will," she promised.

A moment more and the plane was again in the air soaring high above the tree tops, and while she flew toward the east, Roberta kept a sharp lookout on the ground beneath her. She was thankful that Mr. Wallace's equipment included a pair of binoculars, and every time she thought she caught sight of something, she examined it carefully. She

circled in wide swooping curves, scrutinizing jetting rocks, cliffs, ravines, every spot that could cause an accident in a blinding storm, and she recalled how utterly helpless she felt two nights before when the fog had shut her from sight of everything in the universe. She had gone through a stiff, concentrated drilling, had studied aerodynamics and meteorology; besides spending a third of her waking hours in the air since she started to learn to be a sky-pilot. But Harvey's instruction was of necessity a very limited sort.

The boy could not be expected to know a great deal about weather signs, air currents, tricks of the wind, cloud formations. He had no experience in the harrowing problems that come up in a moment's notice, and he was still unqualified for the license he wanted. The girl's heart ached for her brother, the pain was as sharp as if a knife pierced it, and she lived over, in her imagination, the horror he must have experienced when the storm came sweeping like a gale from the back of the great ledge.

Whether he had struck something in the darkness, or whether something had happened to his machine and he lost control, she could not guess, but she was positive he had not landed safely. The storm had cleared hours before and she knew her brother well enough to be convinced that if he possibly could, he would have communicated in some way with the company for which he worked. If he were uninjured in some isolated section, he would have built a fire, as a signal of his whereabouts. As she drove on in wider circles, she glanced back toward the ledge hoping to discern a spiral of smoke informing her that he had been found, but no such message met her burning eyes. She bit her lip to keep back the tears when she thought of Mother and Dad, and their great grief when the news reached them.

"They didn't want him to learn this way, and I persuaded them to against their better judgment. They were right and I was wrong," she upbraided herself. "I suppose they know it by now." She realized that when the pilot had given the alarm it would

spread over the whole country. She wondered, for a moment, why no word had reached her, then recalled that she had breakfasted and left Graniteville very early, and had not stopped to look at a paper.

"I've got to shake myself out of this blueness," she declared grimly, then set her brain to calculating what might have happened to the lone boy. "If he were riding east he might not have noticed the storm until it hit his tail, or he might not have realized how bad it was and paid no attention to it," she reasoned. "If he did see it coming, he might have thought it would add to his experience. If he kept on after it started, then turned to go back, it must have hit him hard." She tried to follow an imaginary course such as her brother might have taken, then circled back, her mind active. "He would be blown forward, shoved along west and north, and the speed would be great.

With that idea, Roberta zoomed up five thousand feet, eight, leveled off and shot on at about the rate she thought Harvey would

be going, and followed a northwesterly course. She wished she had asked what sort of instruments he had used and how dependable they were. As much as she could, she kept the glass turned upon the world rolling swiftly beneath her, and half an hour later she had sailed high above the great ledge. Mr. Lonford had said Harvey would not go west of it, but just the same she kept on because she was sure Harvey had little to do with where he went that night. The west side was even more wild and rugged than the east, and for miles stretched in what seemed like an endless expanse of rolling forests. She kicked the rudder and dived lower, leveled off as close to the ground as she dared fly, and began her search anew, tacking, circling, and zigzagging above the territory, which was certainly desolate enough.

Twice she rose to get a broader view of the country, and again she started down. Then she saw the bare torn branches of a huge pine. It might have been struck by the lightning, but the girl examined it. There

was no wrecked plane near it, but she circled wide and low and a few minutes later saw another tree, its topmost branches broken off clean. Her heart hammered as she searched, her hands were so cold she could hardly hold the glasses, but she kept them to her eyes as much as she dared without risk. Half a mile from the second pine, at the mouth of a deep ravine, she picked out a broken mass. In a moment she knew that it was a plane, but it was almost hidden by the thick underbrush that surrounded it.

"That's Harvey, I'm sure," she whispered.

She zoomed up quickly, circled until she located the spot nearest to the wreck, then, after carefully making sure of the boy's location, she dived and landed on a strip of bare hillside. She jumped out without waiting to open the door, grabbed the kit of first-aid remedies, and ran as fast as the tangled brush would permit until she reached the ravine. The plane was there, a huddled mass of wreckage, and her lips breathed a prayer of thankfulness that it had not set itself afire. Presently she was on the spot, pulling

with all her strength at the debris, and she found her brother, still strapped in his seat. His helmet and goggles had protected his face somewhat, but the lower part of his jaw was torn and had bled freely. With fingers that she forced to be steady, she loosened the heavy coat, managed to open his collar and shirt, and pressing her hand over his heart, she made out a faint beat. He was alive! He was alive! That was something! It was wonderful!

Thankfully Roberta set to work to get him free from the wreckage. When she finally achieved this and had him stretched on the ground, she bathed the wound, forced a few drops of stimulant between his set lips and saw the faintest flush of color come slowly to his cheeks. She made a pillow of his coat and covered him with her own long fur-lined one, bound up the injured head, and after a time managed to get more of the stimulant down his throat. When she tried to put him in a comfortable position, he moaned, and she almost cried as she realized that he must be badly hurt. Having

done everything she could think of for his immediate relief, she tried to decide what she had better do next.

In order to get him to the plane she would have to drag him up the steep side of the ravine. Even if she had the strength to do it, the drastic measure would surely add to his suffering, might do him irreparable injury, so she dismissed the idea as out of the question. She remembered that she had promised to build a fire if she found him, but she was beyond the ledge and no one in the camp could see the signal. Nevertheless she started to gather some dry twigs and cleared a spot. The warmth of the fire would be good for Harvey, and some passing flyer might notice it and report, or even come to investigate. All this took time, but finally it was accomplished. Then she recalled how castaways used their shirts, so she hurried to the plane to see if anything had been left that could be used as a distress signal. The only thing she found was a long, light coat belonging to Mrs. Wallace. She tied it to the plane so the wind would catch it, like a sail.

The coffee bottle she found was half full, and there were two sandwiches wrapped in oiled paper in the food hamper. They might help, so she took them back to her brother. The fire had burned low, so she piled on fresh twigs. Several times Harvey moaned, and twice she gave him a few drops of coffee, and bathed his lips from the water bottle. It seemed as if days had passed since she set off on this holiday. Standing beside her brother she thought how differently the day was ending from what she had expected. It occurred to her that he would be better if his shoes were off, so she started to unlace them, but he moaned when she touched his foot.

"It must be hurt," she whispered, and left the shoe on. She could have cried at her helplessness. Then, setting her lips grimly she thought over the situation. Had she better go back? It seemed to be the most logical thing to do, but she dreaded leaving him alone. Possibly someone would come along, so she waited half an hour more. She gave him coffee again and tried to rub his hands, but one of them was bruised and cut badly.

If she could only bring him to consciousness. If he would only open his eyes long enough to tell her how badly he was hurt! But he lay perfectly still, and at last, when she realized that the shadows were lengthening, she made up her mind she must go for help.

After wrapping him more securely in their coats, she put out the fire. She hated to do that, but she knew it would be foolhardy to leave it unguarded. The blaze might creep, or a spark fly and do inestimable damage. She happened to see her watch and was stunned to note that it was nearly five o'clock. She must not waste another minute, so she hurried up the ravine, and a few minutes later was in the plane.

"If I could only get you down to him," she choked. But that was as impossible as getting him to the machine, so she climbed into the cockpit, opened her up, shot toward the edge, rose up, and up. She circled once low over her brother to assure herself he was safe. He had not moved. She scanned the countryside, but no living thing was in sight, so she rose high, set her course, and raced

swiftly back to the construction camp, which was now the centre of confusion. There were dozens of men huddled about the buildings, and when they saw her land, several ran to meet her, Lonford in the lead.

"I've found him," she said tensely. "Can you come back with me?" For answer he hopped into the seat, and they were off again. Half an hour later the pair were beside the boy. Lonford gave him a hasty examination.

"If you can help me a little, I can carry him to the plane," he told her briskly. "The camp doctor is a good one, we'll get him there and fixed up in short order, Miss Langwell," he promised. The man experimented carefully, then, finally lifted the boy to his shoulder and began the ascent up the side of the ravine. Roberta followed with the coats and bottles she had left, and presently, Harvey was placed in the machine with the tall superintendent beside him. Soon they were again in the air, and straight as a bird flies they raced back to camp arriving just as another plane settled on the runway. Rob-

erta paid no attention to it, or its occupants. She stopped her machine, willing hands had a stretcher handy, and Harvey was carried to the emergency hospital in charge of the camp doctor and nurse.

"I thought I might help in the search, Miss Langwell." Roberta turned quickly and saw that Mr. Wallace was standing quietly beside her.

"Oh, oh thank you so much for coming," she gasped.

"A couple of other chaps are in the air, but the radio men have been told of the rescue, so they will come down. I saw your plane coming from beyond that ledge, so I decided to find out what had happened. How did you locate him?"

"I don't know," she answered, "But, oh, Mr. Wallace—oh, I wonder if he'll get well—"

"You just buck right up, young lady, and know that he will. You've been a great little sport through this, and don't go giving up now, that would be mighty foolish. You

found him, he's alive, and now you must not believe for a moment that he will not pull through." He spoke quite sharply, but not unkindly, then he added. "When did you eat?"

"This morning," she told him.

"Not since you left us at the hotel?"

"No," she admitted.

"Small wonder you feel discouraged. Nothing like a square meal to strengthen a man's, or a woman's courage. There must be a cook house somewhere near. I can smell food. Come on, we will find the chef."

Mr. Wallace took her arm and she went obediently to the long, nearly empty mess-hall where he seated her in a rough chair by the table at one corner. Then he went off to find the cook, while Roberta tried hard to dispel gloomy thoughts that would intrude themselves. Suddenly her head felt queer, the room seemed to tip, like the earth coming to meet her when she was in the plane, then things became dark, as if a great cloud had settled about her. Instinctively she put

her hands out to brace herself against the table, and to her ears came a strange ringing, as if a distant fog bell were sounding a warning. Vaguely she tried to reason what it might be, then she heard a gruff voice quite close to her face, but she couldn't open her eyes.

"Well now, she's just caved in."

"Snap out of it, Miss Langwell." That was Mr. Wallace. He had his arm behind her head and was pressing something against her lips. "Open your mouth," he ordered, and Roberta did as she was told. The spoon was tipped up and some excellent hot soup was poured down her throat. "Good, a few more of those will brace you no end." Another spoonful followed and after the third, the girl did brace up and open her eyes. "That's the idea." The air-man smiled down at her, and proceeded to feed her as if she were a baby, until finally she protested.

"Thank you. I feel better."

"Of course you do. Now, eat some more." He continued to feed her until the last drop of soup was gone, and by that time a plate

with a juicy chop, baked potato and spinach was placed before her.

"My goodness."

"It was prepared especially for you, and I don't mind admitting that it looks powerful tempting," Mr. Wallace chuckled.

"I am making a great deal of bother."

"No such thing, Miss!" That was the cook, a huge fellow encased in a large white apron.

"Thank you." She smiled and without further ado proceeded with the meal, which did drive away every trace of weakness. When it was finished, Mr. Wallace smiled his approval.

"That's the way to do it," he grinned.

"How is my brother?" Mr. Lonford had just come in with Logan.

"He's doing splendidly. I just came from him. Doc says he'll pull him around in short order—"

"Is he badly hurt?"

"He has a choice collection of bruises and a sprain or two, but nothing to be alarmed about. Being out all night did not help him

any, and of course the loss of blood isn't the best thing in the world, but in spite of all that, he'll come along in short order. Can't say what might have happened if he had not been located soon—"

"Oh, I'm so glad."

"Aren't we all! It beats me how you happened to find him. No one here would have thought of looking the other side of the ledge," Lonford said.

"I figured the wind would have driven him further than he expected, that he might believe he was near the camp and try to land even if he couldn't see the ground."

"The pilot here went over and examined the plane. He thinks it developed engine trouble, but when your brother is well enough he can tell us all about it," Mr. Logan told her. They all spoke so casually, that it helped Roberta to be more hopeful and banish her fears.

"Your father telephoned and talked with the doctor."

"Is he coming?" Roberta asked.

"Doc said he didn't need to, but he may

anyway, just to relieve his mind about the whole thing."

"When we get back to Graniteville, I'll call up your father," Mr. Wallace promised, then went on. "The mess hall will be full of hungry men in a very few minutes," then Roberta realized that the long tables were set, a few workmen were already in their places.

"I'm in the way—"

"Don't get up unless you feel all right," the superintendent urged.

"Oh, I do. I'd like to see Harvey."

"We'll see what Doc says." They walked slowly out into cool air, and Lonford led them to the emergency hospital. "Will it be all right for Miss Langwell to see her brother?"

"Just for a minute," the doctor agreed. They went to the tiny room where the young fellow was being attended by a spick-span nurse. Most of his head was covered with bandages, and his eyes were closed. He was so white that Roberta forgot he was pronounced in no serious danger.

"Harvey," she gasped fearfully, and he raised his lids just a little, then opened them wide.

"Hello, Sis," he grinned weakly.

"Hello yourself," she giggled a bit.

"How'd you get here?" he asked.

"Flew," she told him.

"It's great to see you," he said, then the doctor came to the bedside and motioned to the nurse.

"That's enough talking for the present," he announced, so they left and Roberta was satisfied that Harv was going to be all right. It was simply great to see him, and a little song of thankfulness rose deep inside her. She was mighty glad that he wasn't still lying the other side of the ledge, wounded in the wrecked plane.

"Thank you very much, Doctor." She held out her hand and the medical man took it with approval.

"This camp isn't exactly fitted out for women guests," Mr. Wallace said as they left the hospital. "I think we better go back to the hotel."

"All right," Roberta agreed.

"I'll ride with you and send someone for the other plane," he proposed, and the girl was not sorry, but when she got into the cockpit, he did not take the pilot's seat. Although he did not tell her so, he wanted her to fly back because he thought it would be better for her to be busy at the controls.

An hour later they landed at the hangar she had left that morning. When the plane came to a stop, Roberta noticed that most of the men who had attended the luncheon were present, besides a number of people she had never seen before. She did not know that the news of the rescue of her brother had been broadcast, and that Mr. Lonford had telephoned that she was on her way back. The crowd pressed close, and when she stepped on to the ground, they cheered lustily. For a moment she was astonished, then realized that the cheers were for her, and was so embarrassed she did not know which way to turn. A young newspaper man pressed forward, and a camera man shouted.

"Won't you please look up, Miss Lang-

well!" She glanced toward him, the machine clicked, and then there were more clicks.

"Won't you tell us how you found your brother?" someone demanded.

"There isn't anything to tell," she insisted. "I just looked for him and found him," she answered, then turned to Mr. Wallace. "Can't we go on, please?"

"Go easy, boys. You have some pictures. Just remember she's had a trying day, and this sort of thing isn't exactly nerve-resting," Mr. Wallace said. Then the men made way for her, but the crowd cheered all the way to the car. When they were finally in the hotel, Roberta felt as if she would far rather look for lost aviators than face a hero-worshipping lot of people.

"Poor Lindbergh. I am glad I did not do anything so wonderful as he did," she sighed with relief as they stepped into the lobby.

"My dear girl." That was Mrs. Wallace, folding her in her arms.

"We'll keep quiet this evening," Mr. Wallace proposed, and there were no objections, certainly none from Roberta.

VIII

CHANGED PLANS

The next morning when Roberta opened her eyes the sun was streaming through the hotel window. For a moment she forgot the near-tragedy of the day before, but it came back to her quickly in all its agonizing details. Someone knocked at her door and her first thought was that Harvey was worse.

"Who is it?" she called as she hopped out of bed and slipped into a dressing gown.

"Mrs. Wallace," came the answer, so the girl hurried to admit her. "Good morning, my dear, may I come in?"

"Surely. Did you get word from my brother?"

"No, but I was anxious about you. We had breakfast some time ago and my husband

said to let you rest, but I just had to know that you are all right."

"I feel fine, thank you." She glanced at her watch and gasped when she saw that it was ten o'clock. "My goodness—I'm so sorry. We're due at—"

"Don't worry about that. Mr. Wallace got one of the pilots here to take him on for the meeting, and he's coming back this evening. He left our plane so you could visit the camp, and I think I shall go with you if you don't object," Mrs. Wallace announced.

"Of course I shall not object. It's mighty good of you both."

"We are a very marvelous couple, we both admit it," the older woman grinned, then went on more seriously, "you hop into your bath and by the time you are ready I shall have some breakfast up here for you. I had just a little with my husband at the crack of dawn, so I'll have a real meal with you."

"Thank you, that will be fine, but I feel perfectly able to go down stairs," Roberta assured the good lady.

"You look fit, but it will be quieter here. Hop along. Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"Thank you, no. I'll shout if there is." Presently the girl was splashing in the bath, and by the time she was ready, the waiter had arranged a small table by the window and the food was waiting. "I feel as if I could eat a dirigible."

"I didn't think to have one served. Try the grapefruit." They took their places, and as the meal progressed Roberta thought solemnly of Harvey, and wondered anxiously how he was progressing.

"Do you think they were just fooling me yesterday when they said Harv would get over this?" she asked at last.

"No indeed, I do not believe they were."

"Did the doctor tell Mr. Wallace anything more than he told me?" she persisted.

"A little, but don't you worry about it. Mr. Wallace isn't the sort of man who believes in keeping things back. Of course, dear, you realize that anyone who is ill sometimes develops complications. There is always that

danger, but your brother's heart is strong, his blood good, and his habits the best; those things are all in his favor, and when a healthy body gets a banging up it gets right to work with astounding rapidity to correct the difficulty. New blood is made, wounds heal, and bones knit properly. It may take him a while to get over this, two or three weeks perhaps, possibly longer and then he'll have to take things easy for a while until he builds up again," she explained carefully.

"I was worrying for fear he might be crippled," Roberta answered with a shudder.

"Don't do that, for as far as the doctor could tell yesterday there is no injury that cannot be remedied. I telephoned about an hour ago, and Mr. Logan told me Harvey had rested as well as could be expected, that he had some fever, but it is not alarmingly high."

"Did he tell them what happened to the plane?" Roberta asked.

"I do not believe they bothered to ask him. He can give them the details when he is

stronger. Now, shall we get ready to pay him a visit. After you have seen him is time to decide how long you ought to remain here. Mr. Wallace will get another pilot if you feel that you'd rather not go on with us."

"Thank you. I do not know that it will help Harv but we'll find out." Roberta hurried to get ready for the trip, and soon the two were down stairs. As they stepped into a waiting car, their pictures were snapped by an enterprising photographer, and just as the chauffeur started, they saw a very disappointed looking young man who had hoped to get a newspaper story. Roberta realized that she had not seen the morning paper and wondered a bit about that. Mrs. Wallace guessed what was in her mind, and smiled.

"I appropriated your paper, my dear. Reporters always make a great deal of such a story, and the ones printed are most colorful. You can read them later when the surmises will not distress you."

"All right." Soon they reached the hangar, and got off into the air as quickly as possi-

ble, for there was a curious crowd lingering about the place, and the girl was eager to get away from it. The plane was on its best behavior, and the moment they had altitude enough, Roberta leveled off and made a bee line for their destination. They had covered about three-quarters of the distance, were racing through a cloud bank, when, above the roar of her own motor and the shrill whistle of the wind through the wires, she thought she caught the bellow of other engines. She knew that it must be another plane, and by the noise it made, a big one. Peering through the mist she tried to catch a glimpse of the machine but she couldn't, so she zoomed high to be out of its way. There is almost no end to the vast expanse of sky, but in spite of the fact there seems to be plenty of room, planes have hit each other, when a few feet margin might have saved a collision. At seven thousand feet she broke through the ceiling, and glancing down at the swirling cloud mass she was fascinated by its ever changing beauty. It was as if some master hand was command-

ing the ethereal forces, and she stared with admiration as she flew above the panorama. Then, suddenly, some distance ahead, she could see the edge, and a moment later a huge plane darted out of the envelope, its wings glistening in the bright sunshine. It was a tri-motor, probably carrying passengers, and Roberta was glad she had given it a wide berth.

Whoever was at the controls had dived low in an effort to get a safe view of the country, and as Roberta was nearing the construction camp, she kept an eye on the big plane. She couldn't watch it long, for its pilot had increased its speed, and soon it was little more than a speck miles ahead of her. A bit later and the girl glimpsed the tip of the giant ledge outlined sharply against the blue sky and soon she could see the great construction camp spread out at its base. With a sigh of both thankfulness at being near, and anxiety at the news she would learn, she began the descent, but it wasn't until she had picked out the landing strip that she noticed the big plane coming

to rest on the further end. Vaguely she realized that in a few minutes she would know who had been her companion in the clouds, but she had no curiosity regarding the identity of the travelers. There was abundant space for her own machine and it rolled to a stop, its tail turned to the stranger as if it intended to hop away from it any moment.

"You needn't be so high hat!" There was a decidedly southern drawl, that belongs forever to Texas, in that voice, and Roberta gasped with astonishment.

"Larry Kingsley!"

"The same, pleased to meet you, Miss," he grinned. "Hello, Mrs. Wallace. See the skypilot hasn't dashed you to fragments yet." He had the two doors open and the ladies alighted. Somehow the sight of him, jolly and fine, drove away some of the dread in Roberta's heart, and for the moment it did not occur to her to ask why he came.

"So it was you who chased me up to the roof back there," she managed to laugh a little.

"So it was you who scooted off as if you'd

been caught snitching jam," he retorted.

"I was hoping you would arrive soon—" Mrs. Wallace put in.

"Did you know he was coming?" Roberta demanded.

"Guilty," she admitted with no sign of embarrassment. But it wasn't until they reached the office that Roberta had an inkling of why the company had sent one of its crack flyers to this isolated section of the country. When they were admitted, she saw a man whose back was startlingly familiar. He half turned, but before he could face about, she knew him.

"Dad, oh Dad!" Just as any girl who lives all her days on the ground would have done, Roberta sprang to his outstretched arms and buried her face on the loved shoulder.

"Daughter." That was all Dad said, but it meant more than volumes and was entirely satisfactory. As they held each other closely a sudden thought struck her and a cold fear assailed her. Harvey must be worse and they had sent for her father.

"Oh, is he—" She looked up and couldn't blink back the tears.

"We decided last night that we would feel better if we were here and could see the boy, dear, so Mr. Trowbridge arranged for us to come, and sent along the company's surgeon to be doubly sure," her father explained quickly.

"We?" Roberta repeated.

"Your mother went right in to Harv. He knew we were on the way, but the doctor thought it would be just as well if he didn't see too many of us at once," he told her.

"I am so glad. Having you with him will brace him up no end," she managed to smile, and she knew that she was right, because Dad and Mother had never failed to be the greatest influence in their children's lives. She visioned the sick room, and could hear her brother, as clearly as if she were present, saying:

"Hello, Mom—I'm fine."

"You folks may as well sit down," Logan invited hospitably, and chairs were brought. Then they talked quietly, and fifteen min-

utes later the girl heard the familiar rustle of a skirt, and jumped to her feet before the door was opened to admit Mrs. Langwell.

"Mummy, Mummy," she called softly, and her mother, who did not know she was there, blinked her own surprise.

"Berta," she answered, and then there was another happy reunion. Finally, the mother was seated beside her daughter, and held her hand. "They tell me that it was you who found him, dear—"

"I had to find him," Roberta replied, as if that were quite enough, and her mother smiled tenderly.

"I guess that is right, you had to find him," she said bravely. Mr. Langwell had already followed the attendant to his son's room.

"How is he? Could he talk to you?" she demanded.

"Oh yes, he said that he is fine," and Roberta chuckled as she recalled her vision of the meeting. "The doctor we brought is going to examine him. In cases of this kind, two good heads are always better than one.

When we are sure that he isn't in actual danger, Dad will go back, he can't leave his business too long, but I may stay. Mrs. Lonford has room, they say, and is willing to put us up for a while," she explained.

"How do you like flying, Mummy?" Roberta asked eagerly. Almost as soon as the words were out, she wished she had not said them, because flying had brought them this trouble.

"Every minute that I was coming, I was grateful for the marvelous machine which could get me here so quickly, dear; and I was doubly grateful that my baby girl knew enough to go for her brother, find him and bring him the help he needed so badly," she answered. Roberta was relieved at the reply, but she made light of her own part in saving Harv.

"Why Mummy, someone would have sighted him. I just happened to be first," she declared.

"He was there a good many hours without being sighted dear," Mrs. Langwell reminded the girl. After that they chatted

about the trip, things at home, friends and family until finally the nurse came in to say that young Mr. Langwell wanted to know where in heck his sister was keeping herself.

"I'll go right in and tell him," she laughed and in a few minutes she was in the room. Harv did not look any too encouraging. It seemed as if he were one vast bandage, but his eyes were open wide, and he grinned at his sister.

"Hello, Old Lady," he said, then added, "Take note I didn't call you a little girl."

"If you had, I should have thrown something at you," she declared.

"Would you hit a man when he's down—"

"Of course. Now, sure you are not talking too much?"

"They'll put the gags on if I do, and shoo you all out," he told her, then his eyes softened. "I made them tell me how I got here, Sis—"

"You always did have a huge bump of curiosity. How do you feel?" She tried to change the subject.

"Fairly decent considering—"

"What happened to you, motor go conkey?" she asked quickly.

"Guess so. I didn't notice the storm coming up until it hit me with a bang, then I started back, the wind seemed to come from every direction and blew me along like a cork. Tried to figure about where I was and when I thought I was east of the camp, I started down, then the motor stopped, without previous announcement, the light on the instrument board winked a good bye, and that's the last I knew. Had some crazy dreams about trying to get free of the safety belt, and being so thirsty that I dived into Niagara Falls for a drink," he answered.

"You certainly selected a spot where you'd get it—" she jollied. "Niagara Falls is noted for its juiciness—"

"Yes, but I started to say—"

"I do not believe that you had better stay any longer," the nurse interrupted, so Roberta got up quickly.

"I'm sorry you were hurt, old man, but mighty glad that you're on the mend," she said softly.

"Much obliged for your timely arrival, Sis," he said soberly. "Guess you think I'm a kind of dud as a pilot."

"Nothing of the sort," she said stoutly. "Now, we musn't let you talk yourself to death." Just then the two doctors entered, and Roberta went with Dad back to the office, where Mother waited for them.

"You said yesterday you would like to look over the works," Mr. Lonford, who just came in with a tall lanky young man, said. "This is Mr. Perkins, he'll show you about if you like."

"That's wonderful, Mr. Perkins. Do you know that we landed in your father's front yard about a week ago?" Amy Perkins looked at her as if she had gone crazy.

"You landed where?" he demanded incredulously.

"Right in your father's front yard. It was foggy, and we couldn't see a thing—"

"Guess if you could have seen you would never have risked the plat," the young man told her. "Land sakes, it's all rocks and crags."

"We discovered that in the morning," Mrs. Wallace put in, and Amy could find nothing further to say. As they walked outside, Mrs. Wallace told the young man that his father and mother were well, and that they had promised them to see him if they came near the camp.

"It does beat all, your being there," he remarked, then began, in a business-like fashion to point out interesting sections of the works. Just as they had climbed to the top of an observation platform they noticed a young chap running toward them, and immediately Roberta recognized her brother's pal, Wilbur Voorhees, Bur for short.

"Hello home folks," he shouted as he leaped the stairs, two at a time. "Gee, it's great to see you. How's Harv? They told me he is doing all right, under the circumstances, but, when I heard you were all coming, it set me wondering. Is he coming on?"

"We believe he is," Mrs. Langwell assured the young fellow. "You are looking well, Wilbur."

"Me, oh, I'm feeling top hole; but have

been kind of down in the mouth over the pal. Glad he's out of danger." He turned quickly to Roberta and his eyes shone with admiration. "Gee, Bert—you're—you ought to be a boy. Seen the papers? They say you are—"

"Haven't you learned not to believe all you read in the papers?" Roberta interrupted quickly. "I was wondering if we were going to get a sight of—"

"My charming self. Your trip would have been spoiled if you hadn't," he grinned cheerfully. "Well, a working man has to be on the job. See you later, perhaps. Tell the family I'm able to hold my head up," he hurried away, and a few minutes later they saw him join a group of workmen who were climbing aboard a small truck. He waved at the party, and they all waved back until he was out of sight.

"Calculate that you have seen everything worth while," young Perkins told them when they came down from the platform, so they made their way back to the office, where they found the two doctors talking earnestly.

"I want to assure you, Mrs. Langwell,

that your son is doing remarkably well. There is no telling how much more serious his condition would have been had he not been located when he was, but I am sure he will improve rapidly. He is getting the best of care here, and after he is around, if he isn't too ambitious, doesn't do anything to cause a set back, he'll almost forget this experience," the doctor from the Lurtiss Field explained carefully.

"Thank you, that is good news," she told him with a sigh of relief.

"Mummy, do you want me to stay with you?" Roberta asked.

"I should like to have your company, my dear, but I do not need you. With all the good friends here, we can manage, and I expect that Mr. Wallace would like you to finish the trip with him."

"He will be glad to let her off if it is necessar," Mrs. Wallace put in quickly.

"I do not feel that it is necessary."

"All right. We'll keep in touch with you by telephone," Roberta promised, then she paid another visit to Harv, but as he was

asleep she tip-toed away, and came back to the office. "I expect we better get back to Graniteville, Mrs. Wallace."

"Probably that is the best plan."

It was with a much lighter heart than she had felt for many hours that Roberta climbed back into the cockpit. Mother, Dad, Bur, Amy, the doctors and Mr. Lonford, to say nothing of Larry Kingsley, who helped in the take-off, were there to see the start, and when the propeller started, they dodged to a safe distance. They cheered and waved as the plane lifted gaily, and went singing a melodious song, which the echoes took up until it sounded as if a band of mountain giants were giving a concert. She zoomed high, curved above the field, waved her hand to the spectators, who were growing rapidly smaller, then leveling off, headed for Graniteville. Whether anyone heard her or not, she sang all the way. When the propeller stopped her voice rang out clear and sweet, then, covered with confusion at what she was doing, she stopped abruptly as the machine lighted.

"That sounded good," the mechanic remarked as he came to assist the party off and to go over the plane.

"I heard snatches of it in the air," Mrs. Wallace laughed. "It's rather selfish of you to give concerts only where they cannot be fully enjoyed, my dear."

"If they could hear me sometimes, they would send up to see if I had gone crazy," Roberta answered. She was glad their coming had not been heralded, so there was no crowd, and when they reached the hotel, they found a message from Mr. Wallace, asking his wife to telephone to him. The good lady got the connection at once, and when she had finished talking, she turned to their sky-pilot.

"My husband thinks he will remain where he is, and we can pick him up tomorrow afternoon."

"Alright," Roberta agreed readily. With Dad and Mother on hand she knew that Harvey would be well looked after, so she need not worry.

"You can telephone your mother in the

morning before we start so you will have the latest news. Now, if you want to look at the newspapers, they are here. The main reason I did not leave them around this morning was because they announced that Mr. and Mrs. Langwell were on their way with Mr. Kingsley—I thought it would be rather a nice surprise for you to meet them at the camp," Mrs. Wallace explained.

"That was a mighty nice idea and a most beautiful surprise," Roberta declared. "Thank you for doing it."

IX

A DANGEROUS TRY-OUT

News from the camp the next morning was most reassuring, so Roberta and Mrs. Wallace left Graniteville and its cheering populace as early as they could get away, but the girl sky-pilot had to shake so many hands and autograph so many odds and ends that she wondered her fingers were not too cramped to manipulate the controls. The crowd gathered from near and far to get a glimpse of the young woman who had saved her brother's life, and they pressed so close that she was filled with terror lest some of them be injured. The start, however, was made at last without accident, for which she was duly grateful. She realized perfectly that the ovations were given with the kindliest of motives, but as she spiraled for alti-

tude she resolved mentally that the next time she did a spectacular stunt, if she had to go through one again, it would be conducted with the greatest secrecy.

It was nearly two hundred miles to the town where they intended to stop, and as they sailed along smoothly, the plane behaving exactly as it should, Roberta had time to think a bit and really to enjoy the trip. She had no fear now for Harvey, it was fun to have seen Bur Voorhees, and meet Amy Perkins. Most of all, it had been a happy relief to see her father and mother. The country beneath them was dotted with tiny cities which, from their elevated position, looked like play villages such as children build. They had covered more than half the distance when the tiny red light at the telephone flashed.

"Hello—" Roberta said to let Mrs. Wallace know she was listening.

"I forgot to tell you that Mr. Wallace will not be at the regular airport. He said to fly west of the town. There is a small lake, and he will be waiting on the other side of it."

"I'll watch for it," Roberta answered.

"He wanted to avoid crowds, I think," Mrs. Wallace explained further and Roberta was glad.

"That is fine."

"He told me also that they are going to test out a new plane, or some new parts for a plane, I don't remember which, and if we get there in time, we can see the try-out."

"That is sure to be interesting," Roberta replied. "We ought to be able to make it easily."

"All right." The light winked out, and the girl concentrated on her job, consulted charts and maps, and made various calculations. Half an hour later she could see the town, its huge airport close to the edge. The light poles marked it unmistakably, and further west was the lake, lying like a great blue sapphire against a background of dark green. As she came closer, she picked out a clear spot from which fluttered a line of tiny banners which she knew had been put up as a guide for her benefit. Sailing high over the drome she saw a huge crowd gathered,

and was mighty thankful that she did not have to land there. On she went swiftly, shut off the motor, and glided down to the landing, coming to a stop a few feet away from a group of men, and two automobiles.

"See you got here all right." Mr. Wallace came to greet them, and he smiled cheerfully. "Thought you'd appreciate this retreat, but we have to get out of it quickly or the mob will be on us."

"Let's hurry," Roberta urged earnestly, and Mr. Wallace laughed.

"You do not care much about lionizing, do you, Miss Langwell?"

"Not at all, especially when my propeller is likely to chop some of the lionizers in two," she answered.

"Come this way." One of the men hurried to the waiting limousine, the ladies were helped in, and the rest of the party took the second car.

"Is there someone to look after the plane?" Roberta asked anxiously.

"Yes indeed. There are three men to guard it, besides a mechanic to give it the once

over while we watch the sky show," Mr. Wallace answered, then went on, "I have concluded my business here, so we will hop off about four o'clock.

"Good," Roberta smiled.

"We'll have a picnic supper in a place I know, right by a stream, and we'll have fish, unless my luck has deserted me," he promised.

It had been some days since they had indulged in such a party, and Roberta and Mrs. Wallace exchanged glances of delight at the prospect. It was hardly possible they would not have fish, for if he knew the spot, he had practiced in the water before, and they were confident of having a good meal and a jolly time. In twenty minutes the cars had crossed the town, reached the air drome, and were being escorted by mounted officers who cleared a way for them to the center of the field, where the tests were to take place. The party alighted, and were introduced to prominent airmen as well as plain citizens.

"Should you like to have a close-up of the plane?" one of the committee asked.

"Indeed I should," Roberta replied eagerly. Soon she was standing beside the machine, which was brand new, shiny and beautiful. The man who had designed the new part was beside it, and he was delighted to explain his invention, its use and his theories. The girl sky-pilot found him wonderfully interesting, and a few moments later, a pilot came forward. He too was introduced, but he merely nodded an acknowledgement and climbed into the cock-pit, for it was nearly time for the start. He and the inventor talked together for a moment, then they all got out of the way. They watched the pilot inspect the controls, adjust his parachute, test its buckles, then waved his hand to let them know he was ready.

"Contact," someone bellowed an instant later, and the plane was in motion, the grim young man sitting alert in his place, as the machine shot forward, then it lifted and amid a great cheer, had taken the air.

"It's a beauty," Roberta exclaimed as she watched the fascinating performance, and the inventor, who was beside her, smiled his

appreciation, although he kept his eyes lifted and watched every maneuver the skilled pilot performed.

All the preliminaries that the test pilot tried out were made with great success, sharp turns, climbing turns, true Immelmanns, loops, short vertical dives, and so on through the whole repertoire, which brought the plane ten thousand feet in the air. It finished up with a long vertical dive, while the watchers held their breaths then sighed with relief when he came out of it, leveled off and finally glided back to the very spot from which he had started.

"Hurrah," Roberta shouted, but her cheer was drowned by thousands of others, which were given with whole hearted appreciation for both the pilot and the plane. The inventor was immediately surrounded by a congratulatory mob, he grinned at the applause, and with the Wallaces and Roberta beside him, managed to make his way to the machine, where he shook the pilot's hand and thanked him earnestly.

"Good work," was all he was able to say,

but the two words meant a great deal, then he turned to Roberta. "Should you like to give it a try-out, Miss Langwell, I should be honored if you will?"

"Oh, yes, that would be wonderful, but I don't know—"

"There isn't much you do not know about airplanes, and I should like to see how a woman can manage it. Personally, I think it should be a prime favorite with the ladies. My sister flies a little and she took it up for a solo flight."

"Go ahead," Mrs. Wallace urged, so Roberta took the pilot's place, Mr. Wallace adjusted the straps and the parachute and gave her a bit of advice, for he had inspected the machine before. There was another cheer when it became known that Roberta Langwell, Sky-Pilot, was to take the plane up and through its paces. She was more excited, if that was possible, than she had been when she made her first flight. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes flashed as she glanced over the side to be sure that no one was in the way.

"Ready?" she asked, and Mr. Wallace nodded.

The inventor smiled and she thought he was pretty nice to ask her to try it out, although she would rather have done it less publicly. Mechanically she threw the switch and the plane was in motion. It sped the length of the runway, lifted easily, and soared almost as lightly as a bird. As she spiraled for altitude she could hear the crowd cheering, for now there was only perfect confidence in the new machine and no one thought of danger. For the first few minutes Roberta had difficulty with the controls, for the plane was much more swift than any she had taken into the air. Its builder expected to develope a racer from the same model, and she was sure it would be a speed winner. It responded to the slightest touch, and she giggled happily.

Roberta had no idea of doing anything more than fly about for a while. The pilot had already put the plane through its paces beautifully and she did not want to do any showing off, besides she never felt the least

inclination to do stunts. During the course of her training, she had been well drilled as to what to do in an emergency, but since she had secured her license she had not been called upon to extricate herself from any very serious predicament, although she had not missed any of the ordinary problems which are bobbing up daily in an aviator's experience.

Today she was feeling particularly happy, and the plane, which was taking her where she willed to go, was a joy forever. She thought of the new model being built by the Lurtiss Company and wondered if it could possibly be as great a masterpiece as this one she was flying. She banked, and circled high and higher until the altimeter pointed indifferently to twelve thousand feet. Then she remembered that Mr. Wallace wanted to have a fish-party supper somewhere in the wilds and if she was up too long they could not start in time and his sport would be spoiled. With a longing glance at the glorious, alluring expanse of space that she had almost all to herself, she started down, the

wires singing " I don't want to go home" in every key.

"Neither do I," Roberta laughed, but nevertheless, duty called and she had to come to earth, figuratively and literally.

She manipulated the controls and started a spiral, flapping her wings jauntily as she descended, then dived swiftly while the wind wailed as she cut through it sharply. She had come a thousand feet. With her eyes on the instrument board she leaned forward against her safety strap, another thousand feet, and another. She felt as if she had been playing truant and just a bit sheepish over the adventure. Then, quite suddenly, without preliminary warning, there came a terrific bang and before the girl could even guess what had happened, the plane shot down as if it had been exploded from a gun.

For a fraction of an instant Roberta glanced over the side at the great globe rushing up to meet her, and it wasn't until she had cooly tried to manipulate the controls that she realized she was powerless to bring the plane out of the dive. Only a moment be-

fore it had responded readily to her slightest touch, and now it was dashing through space, like a horse that had taken the bit in its teeth and refused to do anything but rush on to its own destruction. The law of gravitation was right on the job, drawing like a powerful magnet, as if anything more was needed to pull her down. Frantically the girl tried for mastery, but the effort was futile and reluctantly she had to admit that the splendid machine was doomed. The altimeter registered nearly nine thousand feet and the indicator was skipping swiftly from point to point. Then, in a detached sort of way, she thought of herself, and what that mad plunge would mean. Into her mind came the recollection of the promised picnic supper. That would be spoiled, utterly ruined. It seemed too bad. It occurred to her that she had better do something so Mr. and Mrs. Wallace would not be disappointed.

Then Roberta's fingers plugged at the safety belt that held her securely to her seat. It snapped open and she started to raise up, but the strength of the wind pushed her

down. As she climbed up to the wing, she had to use both hands and feet to get out of the cock-pit. It took every ounce of strength she possessed, but finally, after what seemed like an interminable time, she hauled herself to the edge, where she straightened almost to her full height. One breathless second she balanced herself on the leather binding, then, driving as hard as she could, with one foot, like a skater, she leaped. The wind instantly caught her and snatched her clear of the diving plane. She saw it drop out of the range of her vision as she sprawled between the earth and sky. Then she remembered the parachute strapped to her back, but she let herself fall further before she fumbled for the ring. At last her fingers closed on it with a sure grip, while she rolled over and over. When she faced down she could see the plane, and once she found herself dropping "neck to neck", but the machine was heavier, so it spurted ahead. She thought about cats, how they are supposed to land on their feet, and she wondered why human beings were not so fortunate, and im-

mediately came the idea that if she were to land on her feet it would mean shattered legs at least.

That thought brought her mind up with a sharp snap and her fingers tightened on the ring, she pulled the rip-cord, and the parachute opened, jerking her upright in the harness. She felt as if she were sitting on nothing, or standing to be more specific, but her body did no more acrobatic maneuvers, and from her elevated position as she floated easily downward, she watched the plane. A minute later, it seemed longer to the girl, it landed at the edge of the air drome, crumpled instantly into a mess of useless wreckage. Indifferently she saw the crowd race toward the spot, and she also observed that hundreds of white, terrified faces were turned toward her.

"If I land in that crowd there will be another demonstration," she thought wildly, so she pulled on the cord, spilled some of the wind that was easing her fall, and managed to guide herself over the town. It had taken nearly twenty minutes to drive across

in the limousine, but falling out of the sky, Roberta did it in a great deal less time, although it seemed to her that it had been hours since she had leaped into the safety of the air. A strong breeze was blowing, and it swept her toward the lake. That wasn't so good, she decided, so she spilled some more air, and at last her feet touched the edge of the water. The little waves lapped over her ankles, and except for the wetting, she was unhurt.

The girl could see her own plane waiting for the take-off, and two of the men who had been left in charge of it, came dashing toward her. She pulled the great silken parachute down, and freed herself from the harness as quickly as she could.

"Are—are you hurt, Miss Langwell?" The man's face was ghastly white as he spoke and he seemed to expect to be told that she was killed.

"No, I'm all right, thank you," she answered. He helped her to land, for she had forgotten that she was standing in the lake.

"That was some stunt you pulled," the other man declared. "Sure you are not hurt, sprained or something?"

"I'm perfectly whole," she insisted. By that time a car came around the curve on one wheel, and two of the men who were in it leaped out while it was still on the run. She bit her lips as she recognized the inventor of the machine that had just been demolished. Mr. Wallace was right beside him, and both men stopped short when they realized that she was quite safe.

"Great guns," Mr. Wallace exploded.

"I'm so sorry about the plane—" she said contritely.

"So am I, Miss Langwell. Beastly sorry that it had to do its busting up when you were in it," the inventor said quickly.

"You were so kind to let me take it, and I feel dreadful that I wasn't able to manage it better," she lamented.

"Don't worry about that. There must have been some defective spot; it would have gone the next trip it took, no matter who happened to be in it. The next one we build will

be triply inspected, every sliver of her."

"She behaved beautifully, then—I don't know what happened, really, I wasn't able to tell. I don't know what I did—"

"You didn't do anything to have caused the difficulty. We were watching you and marveled at your control. I had just said that you were a remarkably sane pilot, a good many would have been tempted to do stunts, nose dives and loops. I might have myself. But you were just having a joy ride, so don't blame yourself," he insisted.

By that time other cars came tearing around the corner, and in one of them was a group of newspaper men, determined to photograph the girl-sky-pilot, and others equally determined to get a story.

"Why didn't you pull the rip-cord quicker?" one demanded.

"Did you forget you had a chute on?"

"Were you frightened?"

"What did you think about while you were coming down?" The girl sighed, but there was no putting them off.

"I didn't forget that I had the parachute

on, and I really have no idea why I didn't pull the cord more quickly. I thought I pulled it right away, but I was watching the plane. I guess I was frightened, and about the only thing I thought of was a fish supper we are going to have and, oh yes, I thought about cats. I read somewhere that they always land on their feet. Then, I remember I didn't want to land on mine for it might be disastrous. Really, that's all I thought about. Probably it seems odd, but my mind must have been asleep, or something. It was a long time—that is—it took a long time to get here—" she finished, and when she glanced about she saw a dozen broad grins.

"That's a corking interview, Miss Langwell, and I do hope you don't miss your fish supper," one man told her soberly.

"She won't, that is, if you fellows will let her off now," Mr. Wallace put in quickly. They took the hint and made way for her. At the edge of the crowd she saw Mrs. Wallace who immediately climbed into their own plane. The two followed swiftly, and took their places. Mr. Wallace shared the

pilot's cock-pit, and after hasty good-byes, he turned to the girl.

"Let her go." Presently she was again in the air, and this time there was no strangeness about the controls or the response of the machine. "I'll tell you the way to go when we are high enough."

"All right."

"It's about thirty miles from here," he added, and she nodded that she understood.

Roberta noticed that Mr. Wallace watched her closely as they flew through the air, but after the first few minutes he was less alert. Then she realized that he had feared she might be nervous about going up again, so she glanced at him and smiled to let him know that she was none the worse for the experience. "Over there," he pointed and soon they were down again in a perfectly lovely spot not far from a narrow, but deep stream which wound between banks of foliage, and under great over-hanging trees.

"This is gorgeous," she declared.

"I knew you'd like it," Mrs. Wallace laughed. She set to work quickly to arrange

for the picnic, while her husband hurried away to see if he could lure enough fish to his line for their supper. The two women, got the meal spread on a smooth rock, had a fire built, and a pan piping hot when the man returned, his face wreathed in a wide grin.

"Some fisherman I am," he chuckled, and a moment later a part of the catch was sizzling and crackling. While they waited, Roberta toasted some bread at the edge of the fire, and presently enough was cooked so they could start the meal, and never did food taste better.

"I had no idea how hungry I was," she laughed.

"Guess you didn't have much lunch," Mr. Wallace remarked.

"Yes. We had it in the plane, and I ate every bit of mine," she declared, but I felt perfectly empty when I started on this."

"No wonder you were empty. My goodness," Mrs. Wallace gasped.

"Parachute jumping is a great appetizer," Mr. Wallace added.

"I should think it would leave you hollow from the top of your head to the soles of your feet."

"Guess it did," Roberta admitted.

"Well, if you felt any worse than I did watching you—gracious! There you were, sprawled out a mile or so over nothing, and rolling over and over, sometimes under the plane and sometimes on top of it—"

"Was I?" Roberta could hardly believe it.

"You certainly were, and coming down like a bullet, mostly head first. Heavens, it was awful watching you, getting closer and closer, and you didn't pull the cord—oh, it seemed as if you never would pull it—"

"Goodness, I didn't think I took so long."

"It seemed like a week before the thing spread out, then it looked as if you'd catch on some tree and be hurt. Of course it was all over in a few minutes—but it was awful—"

"A thing like that, my dear, is always worse for the spectators than for the pilot coming down—although that's bad enough. For a person who wants to avoid publicity,

I am afraid you have let yourself in for another siege, Miss Langwell." The sandwich Roberta was eating stopped half way to her mouth.

"And this morning I resolved that the next time I did a stunt it would be a strictly private affair," she announced in dismay, and her two companions laughed heartily at her rueful face.

X

ACROSS THE BORDER

"Now for Canada, our peaceful neighbor. Did you know, Miss Langwell that our countries are about the only two in the world which have no fortification or military stations on our frontiers, and they extend about three thousand miles?" Mr. Wallace asked as the party was about to take the air again.

"I knew we had no fortifications, but I didn't realize that all other countries have," Roberta answered.

"It's quite a record. Since our one big scrap with England for independence we have managed to settle any differences that arise without killing each other."

"Well, if United States and Canada can do that for so long, why can't the other countries?" Roberta demanded.

"Must be in the people, I expect," Mrs.

Wallace put in quickly. "I've been to Canada several times and I like it no end."

"We have to have patrols along the Mexican border," Roberta remarked thoughtfully.

"And how!" Mr. Wallace laughed. "Are you ready?"

"All set." The three took their places, and presently the plane was roaring into the air.

"Start due east," Mr. Wallace directed through the telephone, and as Roberta had intended to strike out northeast when she leveled off, she changed her plan.

"Aye, aye, sir." The country beneath them was rough and mountainous. Great jagged peaks lifted their heads high, on some of their tips the snow glistened like sparkling white caps, and some of them had been cut by storms and glaciers. As she flew forward, the girl thought of the intrepid Commander Byrd and his courageous companions at Little America in the Antartic. She recalled the story of the flight through air as thick as milk, above unmapped ridges, and the grim battle to fight his way between ranges whose

tops rose higher than his plane could fly. Beside such a stupendous adventure her own experience loomed infinitesimal.

From such far-away happenings, Roberta's mind hopped to the Construction Camp, where her mother was taking care of her brother, who was making famous progress on his road to recovery. To be sure Harvey was having no easy time of it, but he would come out with whole bones and no serious after affects, and that was something for which they could all be mighty thankful. The mountains and valleys rolled under them, and when she began to eat her lunch, they were flying over wide plains dotted with large cities. At some of them they had stopped earlier in the trip, and now, after the air tourists had paid Canada a friendly visit, only one stop at Albany would separate them from the home field.

"Head her up a bit north," Mr. Wallace directed.

"I will." She changed the course, then went on with her lunch.

"Is your coffee hot?"

"Piping," she replied.

"We spilled a part of ours."

"Too bad. I have more than I shall drink. Let me pass the bottle over to you," she offered.

"Not necessary, thank you. We aren't reduced to short rations."

They didn't talk any more, and when her meal was finished, the girl sky-pilot closed the little hamper, and set herself to enjoy the journey. Half an hour later, Mr. Wallace spoke again.

"See the little house, about as big as a rail-road shack, standing all by itself, with the American flag flying above it?"

"I have it," Roberta replied, and she put the glasses to her eyes to get a closer view.

"That's a border patrol station and there's a Federal officer who has relays of men to relieve him. We have depots like that at highways and special sections. This one is three miles from the Canadian line," he explained. As he spoke a soldierly man in uniform came out of the shack and glanced at the travelers. He too leveled a pair of

glasses and in a moment had satisfied himself regarding the plane and its occupants, then he disappeared. By that time the machine had passed over the spot. "Now, head more to the north." The girl changed her course again, and a minute later the telephone flashed. "We are almost on the border. See some white stone posts, they mark the line. On the way back we may be able to land so you can have a look at one."

"I'll be glad to see it."

"That old house is built half in the United States and half in Canada. It's an ancient affair and the story goes that the woman was American, the man English, they had the land and couldn't agree on which side they would build, so they built on both sides and lived happily ever after." Roberta was looking at the old place and its unique location. It was a huge colonial type, and she noticed another of the white stone posts in front of a giant elm tree in the yard.

"Anyone live there now?" she inquired.

"Believe not, but some people keep it in repair because of the interesting site. Now,

young lady, you are in a foreign land, on British soil, no less."

"I hope they do not turn me back," she laughed, and she did experience an odd feeling of being really away from home.

"Go high and head for Montreal. If I see any traffic officers I'll warn you in time—"

"Do they have air traffic men?" Roberta asked in amazement, then she could hear the two in the passenger cock-pit laughing so hard that it came through the phone. She grinned as she realized that he had been teasing and had caught her napping. As she glanced over the side she had to admit that the open country rolling by under her was very like other places she had seen, but when the homesteads and settlements came into view she noted a difference. Later she saw the St. Lawrence River, nearly as big as the Mississippi, and in an hour's time she sighted the landing field, which looked very trim but not so brand new as most of those in America.

"The wife wants to be excused from things aeronautic, and suggests that you both have

a few hour's holiday," Mr. Wallace said as the motor was stopped and they were gliding to the landing.

"I shall love it," Roberta agreed readily. So, when the party alighted, the two ladies excused themselves to the committee, got into a taxi and were soon spinning either up and down hill until finally the car stopped with a flourish before the Windsor, the most famous hotel in the huge Canadian metropolis.

"Goodness, I have only American money with me," Mrs. Wallace said in dismay as she suddenly realized she was really not in her own land.

"That's all right, Madam. I'd just as soon have American money as any other," the driver assured her, then added politely. "You do not need to exchange it here because it is accepted everywhere."

"How nice. Thank you," she said as she paid the bill.

"We are very near neighbors," the man touched his cap respectfully, and climbed back into his seat.

"Porter?"

"Please." A moment more and the two were being ushered up a wide stairway, along a corridor, and at last to the clerk's desk. "I am Mrs. Wallace—"

"Yes, Mrs. Wallace, we have a reservation for you. Permit me to show it to you." He was a most gentlemanly person and Roberta thought he must be the owner of the hotel; he certainly did not look like an employee. He escorted them to the elevator, and to the rooms reserved. "We thought that you would like these, Mrs. Wallace, but if you prefer a different location we shall take pleasure in changing for you."

"These seem very pleasant, I'll keep them until my husband arrives. Miss Langwell and I wanted to see the city this afternoon."

"There is a sight-seeing bus that starts from the hotel in twenty minutes if you care to take that I'll reserve seats for two," he suggested.

"I am sure we can manage, thank you."

"If you require the maid service the bell is here." He bowed himself out, and Roberta went to the window.

"We are facing a square. It's good looking, and I see a statue of Queen Victoria over there. It looks like a real work of art."

"It is. You'll have an opportunity to get a better view of it before we leave. There is a cathedral the other side which is a replica of the famous one in Rome, but it is not so big. If we are going to be ready in twenty minutes, my dear, we must hop into our dresses lively."

"I'll fly," Roberta answered, and hurried to her own room in the suite where she did some very fancy speeding, but she beat Mrs. Wallace by only two and a half minutes. When they went down stairs, a boy gave them their bus tickets, and escorted them to the entrance where they found the huge car, which was very like thousands in America, already full and waiting for them. She expected some one to shout, "Step lively, please," but no one did.

"This way, ladies." The starter held the door open as if it were their private limousine, and there wasn't a sign of impatience anywhere. It was the first big difference be-

tween her own country and this British soil. Everyone was so delightfully courteous. "Right-O, Jerry."

The door was closed quietly and the bus started. The second thing which gave the American girl a start was the statues and memorial stones erected to men, and women too, whose names were familiar to her from her history-class days, although she never had thought of them as anything but enemies and it had not occurred to her that their acts would be dear to their own people. It was a new viewpoint. Of course these people would revere the memory of their soldiers and sailors who had fought bravely, whether they won or not. The bus glided smoothly through the main business streets, and here and there a building had the same name as one somewhere in the States, as the U. S. was called. There was the Ritz and it was probably older than the Ritz in New York.

"We have borrowed a lot of names, haven't we," she remarked thoughtfully to Mrs. Wallace.

"We have not confined ourselves to just names," Mrs. Wallace answered softly. "Sometimes we forget that in The States."

The trip continued, and finally the bus stopped before an imposing looking store, and the driver announced, in perfect English. "Tourists are invited to stop for half an hour."

"We want to see it," Mrs. Wallace said quickly. So did everyone else, and presently the party was admitted to a famous fur establishment.

"Oh, isn't this wonderful." Roberta gasped.

The floors were covered with thick carpet, so soft one sunk at each step, and there were fur rugs. Skins of bears, tigers, lions, leopards, calves, every animal she knew anything about, and many she didn't. The lounges, couches, settees, and chairs were upholstered with short-skinned fur, and the heavy tables were draped with fine soft hides. Then, there were glass covered closets the full length of the room, besides racks, and hangers of the most beautiful fur gar-

ments. Long, short, and medium for men, women and children. She gasped again as they climbed the wide stairway, the bannister of which was draped with fur rugs and robes, and found herself in an amazing fur land. There were several charming looking girls who were trying on coats and wraps so the customer could get the full effect, and numerous dummy models. There was an air of dignified luxury about the whole establishment that Roberta knew she could never find in a store at home. No one seemed to be in a hurry, everyone seemed to have all the time there was, yet there were none of them idle.

"The time is about up," Mrs. Wallace reminded her young companion. "How do you like it?"

"Never saw anything so gorgeous," she declared enthusiastically. "I suppose they are very expensive."

"Not at all. If you buy one and wear it immediately, you can take it into the United States, or if you get one that does not cost more than one hundred dollars, it will be

admitted free of duty." Mrs. Wallace explained. "Bob and I came up last fall and bought a robe and a rug we are crazy about. Come along."

Presently they were back in the bus. The trip was an interesting one, and the driver announced that another bus would take tourists to the Indian Village, if they cared to go.

"I'd rather see what I can of Montreal than an Indian Village," Roberta decided, and Mrs. Wallace agreed with her. They did stop to see the "palace" of the famous dwarf, his wife and infant son. It was like going through a doll house, but somehow, the tiny people did not attract the girl. She had seen midgets at the Hippodrome in New York, and it had been jolly watching them perform, but in their "home" she felt as if she were intruding, although tourists to Montreal always took in the "palace" if they could.

The party spent three glorious days seeing everything to be seen, and the last morning, Roberta strolled into an all American institution, the Five and Ten. Except for the

difference in the type of clerks behind the counter, and the British flags instead of the Stars and Stripes, she would have been sure she was in one of the hundreds of similar shops on the other side of the line. At ten o'clock they were at the air drome and their plane seemed to look at them reproachfully at being deserted for so long. It hopped into the air as if eager to make up for the lost days and behaved its very best as it was guided above the route of the St. Lawrence River with its teaming boat traffic to and from Quebec.

The girl sky-pilot caught her breath sharply at her first distant glimpse of the old city, its great citadel, and beyond, the world famous hotel, the Chateau de Fontenac with its towers and terraces looking exactly like some ancient castle. Unfortunately they could spend only twenty-four hours in the quaint French-English city, with its winding streets and odd little shops (and its Five and Ten too). There are sections which are quite up-to-date, but they did not interest the young traveler nearly

so much as the older sections of the town.

"It's like walking through pages of history," she laughed. They did take the sightseeing bus, and once the huge machine stopped on the great Plains of Abraham, where they got a marvelous view of the whole surrounding country, like a splendid panorama.

"This," announced the guide, "is the spot where Col. Charles Lindbergh landed with the serum he brought from New York for the late Floyd Bennett, who sacrificed his life in an effort to find a fellow flyer."

"My goodness, Lindy did land here," Roberta recalled, and she looked about the place with even greater interest as she thought of the flight of the Lone Eagle to a suffering air-mate.

"How did this place get its name?" one of the passengers asked.

"From the farmer who originally owned the land. I believe he gave it—or this part—to the city of Quebec."

"Oh," she was plainly disappointed. "I thought it was Biblical."

"It does sound like a place in the Bible and lots of people think that's where it gets the name," the guide admitted. He seemed quite accustomed to the query. The trip was continued, every minute was interesting, but when they got back to the hotel, Roberta found a letter from Mrs. Langwell post marked, Montauk.

"Mother has gone home," she said quickly, and ripped open the envelope to learn the very latest news. She read, then whistled.

"Something surprising?" Mrs. Wallace asked.

"It certainly is. Harvey was able to travel, so Mother took him home to finish getting well—and—this is the gorgeous part—Mr. Trowbridge says that as soon as he is able he may take the Lurtiss test, and if he qualifies, he's going to take the course. That is scrumptious! Bur has gone home, too, and he's going to try to go through the same class. Isn't that great news?"

"Indeed it is and I expect your brother will not waste any time in getting strong," Mrs. Wallace answered. "I'm glad to hear

that his accident hasn't made him air-shy."

"So am I. I wondered if it would."

Roberta went immediately to write her best wishes to her brother, and of course a line or two for the rest of the family. There was so much to tell, that it stretched into quite a long epistle, but at last it was ready to post. The start the next morning was to be at the crack of dawn, so she went off to bed early. Her dreams that night were a great mixture of forts, steep streets, wild flying, and tourist guides. She was awakened by the telephone clanging furiously, and jumped out of bed to learn that it was time to get up.

"Goodness, I feel as if I had hardly got into bed," she declared, but a plunge in the bath took away all sleepiness, so she was ready with bags and what not, when Mrs. Wallace knocked on her door. It was quite dark when they ate their breakfast, but by the time they reached the plane the first morning flush brightened the eastern sky.

"Want me to be pilot?" Mr. Wallace asked.

"Not unless you want to," she told him.

"I don't," he grinned. "In fact, you have rather spoiled me this trip. I shall have to go through a course of sprouts when we get home for I have been very lazy about taking the controls."

"Yes, but that was because your arm bothered you," she told him.

"It is no longer an excuse," he answered. He went to his own place, and soon they were in the air. Mr. Wallace had laid out the course for her on the chart, so now she headed almost due east. That evening they were to be at Nova Scotia, a long stretch. They came down about eleven o'clock to have lunch at an Inn by the side of the road, then Mr. Wallace did relieve her until they landed at the lovely little town of Digby.

"This is where the Fundy tide comes in so high. I believe that you will see it this evening," he explained as they strolled along the hilly, country road. After supper you might take the bus up and go out to meet it. I think Mrs. Wallace would like to go along, but I have an appointment here.

We'll stay over until tomorrow and hustle to Albany—"

"Then home," Roberta laughed.

"Yes, then home. I expect you are a bit wearied of traveling, hops, sight-seeing and so forth."

"Not at all, but it's always nice to get home," she told him.

After supper the two ladies did take the hop over the water to watch the tide come rushing in. As they went out they could see numerous boats resting on mud flats, and after sailing about with the evening sky above them, they came back to find that the great tide had risen so that the boats, big and little, were bobbing and tugging at their hawsers in good deep water. It was wonderfully interesting and Roberta wished that she could see it again.

"Go up in the morning," Mrs. Wallace suggested. "If it is a fair day, the sight will be marvelous. I've seen it, so I know." That sounded like a good plan, so she decided she would carry it out.

XI

THE SWEEPING TIDE

Immediately after breakfast the next morning, Roberta started off early alone in the plane in order to get the full benefit of the amazing spectacle of the incoming Fundy Bay tide. The sky, when she started was clear and bright, and the weather report had promised a fair day. As she flew over the town she could see the acres of drying racks with mackerel, and other fish being cured for market and she thought the sturdy fishing village, with its legends of Acadia and the lovely Evangeline, one of the most delightful spots she had visited. The young girl sky-pilot resolved to come again the first opportunity she got.

As she swept out over the vast expanse of water she noted a number of tiny rugged is-

lands dotted with fishermen's cottages and shacks, and as she went further she passed numerous fishing fleets, their men busy with poles and nets. Around some of the boats were dories whose occupants rowed or motored from one section of the "grounds" to another. She thrilled at the picture, it made her think of Montauk where she had watched similar scenes almost every summer since she was a little girl. She had even gone out in one of the sloops and had a close view of the work, so now she knew almost what the men beneath her were doing. She was positive that if her motor were not making such a noise she could hear them singing sea chanties, jolly, rollicking airs, and simple words, often made up to suit the occasion.

Finally her watch warned her that she had gone about far enough. Then she noted that the sky had suddenly darkened and a rather stiff breeze was coming up. As she curved wide for the return trip, her eyes scanned the water, and off in the distance it seemed to her that she observed an odd com-

motion. Filled with curiosity, she decided to have a closer look, so she completed the circle and went on to investigate. A few minutes later she made out the phenomenon, and although she did not know exactly what it was, it sent a cold shiver down her back.

The waters were churning, as if by some upheaval beneath them, and a great rushing wave, which stood out like a wall above the surface of the bay, was tearing at terrific speed toward the little town. At first she thought it was the Fundy tide, perhaps a bit more tremendous than ordinary, but her good sense warned her that this was no usual upheaval. For an instant she watched it coming, then she realized that it would sweep everything before it. Even a big boat would be swallowed in its depths.

"It must be a tidal wave," she gasped, then mechanically she swung the plane around.

In the distance ahead of her Roberta could see the unsuspecting fishermen, they were right in its path, and when it passed over them it would leave only wreckage and

destruction. She knew they would be unable to see it until it came too close to save themselves. "We've got to do something old girl, now, don't act up." Putting on all speed she tore forward. It seemed hours before she began to draw near the boat furthest out, then she set her brain working furiously to find a way to warn the seaman. Mr. Wallace had left a newspaper in the cock-pit, so she picked it up quickly, occasionally glancing over her shoulder fearful lest she had not been quick enough. But she was speeding faster than the great wave. Gliding as low as she dared, she circled close to one of the boats. Her unexpected maneuver made some of the men glance up at her, then, using the paper as a megaphone, she shouted.

"A tidal wave," and she pointed toward the sea. Someone caught the words, a sailor ran up the highest mast of his boat to look off, and an instant later, she heard a shrill whistle, which she reasoned must be an imperative warning to other boats. That eased her mind somewhat but she zig-zagged to another boat just to be sure, and hoped the

men would be able to take sufficient steps to save themselves from destruction.

Having done all she could to help the seamen, Roberta raced on, glided down to one of the islands and beckoned to a fisherman who had been watching her with interest. He came quickly.

"There's a tidal wave coming fast. I'm sure you are right in its path." The man's face went grim, he asked no questions, but shouted to his companions, who dropped their work instantly, and started to spread the alarm, and as she soared above them again, Roberta could see the members of the community racing helter skelter to the highest rock on the island and she prayed that it would be high enough. At one other island she swooped low and bellowed her warning through the improvised megaphone, then she sped on to Digby, where she found Mr. and Mrs. Wallace wating for her with a group of citizens.

"You've been paying calls—"

"I'm sure I saw a tidal wave out there, Mr. Wallace," she announced breathlessly,

and before the words were out of her mouth, the men of Digby raced off to spread the alarm. They did not stop to question whether she was right or wrong. A false warning would do no harm, but a moment's delay might cost numerous lives. It seemed as if in a minute's time the fire bells, church bells, and steam whistles were screaming shrilly. Excited groups of men, women and children ran out of their homes, and the awful words, a "tidal wave" made them gasp with fear as they started as fast as they could go, to the top of the hill. Automobiles picked up stragglers and folks who were unable to hurry even in the face of the approaching danger.

"We'll take the air," Mr. Wallace announced. Just as they were in the plane a couple of children came crying out of a house. "Where's your mother?" the man called to the biggest one.

"To the store."

"Anyone else in your house?"

"No. Momma told us to stay inside until she came back, but we're afraid, the fire

whistles are blowing." He picked them up without another word, and set them in the plane, then leaped to the controls, and in a minute they were all in the air. As they spiraled high Roberta caught a glimpse of the wave rushing, it seemed with greater strength than her first sight of it. She saw fishing boats battling desperately on top of it, and in the distance she saw the islands, just the tops of them, their inhabitants huddled together in a solid mass.

It took the plane less than a minute to reach the highest part of the town, and there it came down. "You folks get out and I'll see if there is anything I can do to help," Mr. Wallace told them. The babies, too frightened even to cry now, were lifted to safe ground, and in less time than it takes to tell, the plane was back in the air. One of the children tugged at Roberta's skirts, and she picked it up in her arms to soothe it.

"I want my Mama," he sobbed.

"We'll find her," the girl promised, and she prayed fervently that she would be able to keep her word. Mrs. Wallace had the

other child and by that time, the terrified residents began to appear over the crest of the hill. Their faces were white, but few made a sound. Roberta made her way to the edge and now she could see the wave coming nearer and nearer.

"There it is, there it is!" The cry rose from a dozen throats.

"Hurry, hurry," others urged men and women still on the side of the hill. "Hurry." They sprang forward to lend a hand to some spent neighbor, and then above the din, Roberta heard a woman shriek.

"My children, they are in the house. You have got to let me go back!"

"You can't go back," a man who was helping her insisted.

"Let me go back." She would have pulled away, but he caught her in his arms and carried her up above the danger point.

"Mommie, Mommie," shrieked the small boy in Roberta's arms! He wriggled like a little eel, managed to get to the ground, and raced joyously to the woman.

"Oh, thank God, thank God," she sobbed

as she caught him close. The older child went to her too.

Roberta bit her lip to keep back the tears as she watched dozens of such pathetic scenes and reunions, then her eyes traveled to the bay, just as the wave wall swept over the beach, struck the hill, rose in mighty fury, its foamy crest lashing cruelly, tossing the wreckage of the lower part of the town, homes, drying racks, storehouses, and wrenching boats from their long hawsers. People living at the further end of the town, which was above the danger zone, had joined the assembly, and for what seemed hours, they all stood silently watching the sudden destruction that had come on their neighbors. Then, the first shock spent, they went from group to group.

"Come home with us," they invited quietly, and so, slowly the crowd thinned, until finally only a few remained grimly watching the water, which finally began to recede. At last Mr. Wallace joined his wife and sky-pilot.

"We are fortunate that we did not take

rooms lower down," he said quietly. "We would have lost our luggage," then he turned to Roberta. "It's a good thing you went out this morning, Miss Langwell. There is nothing more we can do to help these people. They are a splendid, independent lot, and stand by each other. Soon they will begin to remember who sounded the first warning—"

"Can we leave soon, without being rude?" the girl asked quickly.

"Sure. I expected we should be on our way by this time, so no one will think we are rushing off with undue haste," he smiled, then added, "Just the same, let me thank you, please." He held out his hand, and she took it without flushing.

"Suppose you and Mrs. Wallace hadn't urged me to go to watch the tide," she said quietly. "Do you know if anyone was caught?"

"The minister told me that he thought everyone in Digby had been saved. How many fishermen were unable to cope with it

they can't know until later, when the boats come to dock."

"Planning to stay in Albany long, Bob?" Mrs. Wallace asked.

"Can't tell until we get there," he answered, then went on, "But it's only a courtesy visit I think and we ought to break away soon. Let's start. I got a porter to bring our luggage here, this is a good spot for a take-off. Here's the man now." The bags and other paraphernalia were soon stored in the freight compartment, and the three took their places in the cock-pit. In all the long drive to Albany, Roberta's mind was so busy with the near-tragedy at Digby that she paid little attention to the country, wonderful as it was, that she was flying over. It was late at night when they came down near the Capital of New York, and just the minute she could, she tumbled into bed and slept like a top until morning. Mrs. Wallace called her on the telephone, and as her husband had gone out to keep an appointment, the two ladies indulged in the luxury of breakfast in their room. The meal

cheered them both, and when Mr. Wallace returned, he was wearing such a scowl that his wife glanced at him questioningly.

"I'm thinking of staying over until tomorrow," he announced.

"Very well," Roberta agreed. She tried to answer as if it did not make the least difference in the world to her, but Mrs. Wallace spoke up quickly.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Miss Langwell. He is as anxious as you are to get home, and the field exhibition this afternoon, I know he wouldn't miss for anything. He likes to tease you." Roberta looked her relief because, while she too wanted to watch the tests that afternoon, she was more interested in getting to Montauk to spend the week-end with Mother, Dad, and the recovered brother Harvey.

"I should have known that he would not miss the tests when some of his own ideas are to be given a trial," she answered.

"And the new planes, special pets of yours they tell me, are to be tried out by some of the big experts. Did you know that one is to

be given to the first pilot who does something especially worth while?" Mr. Wallace asked. He entirely forgave his wife for spoiling his joke.

"Yes, and the boys in your first class are all on the *qui vive* to earn one," Roberta told him.

"Why don't you try?" Mrs. Wallace suggested.

"Miss Langwell is 'stunt-shy.' She is an A-One pilot, gets a great kick out of being in the air, but she will not go in for anything more spectacular than wriggling her wings when she is enthusiastic. No rolling over like a puppy for her," the instructor answered for his secretary.

"I can not do anything more than the boys do, nor as much, but I am crazy about those new planes. I used to go down to the factory just to look at a model, and I spent hours in the assembly department watching them put together," the girl admitted.

"You ought to have one," Mrs. Wallace persisted.

"It is almost time we were winging our

way southward," Mr. Wallace reminded the ladies, who were dressed for the flight.

"I've eaten all I want," Mrs. Wallace answered, and Roberta shoved back her chair to signify that she was ready, so a few minutes later, the three were going by auto to the hangar where their plane waited. When they came to a stop the mechanic was just rolling it out onto the runway. Roberta glanced at her watch, it was nearly nine o'clock, then she looked at the wind indicator flapping from the roof of the building.

"If the weather is like this when we get to Long Island, everyone will rejoice." Mr. Wallace observed as he and his wife took their places in the double passenger-seat back of the pilot's cockpit.

"It will be great," Roberta agreed. She was in her own place and tried out the motor to be sure all was well.

"O.K.?" shouted the mechanic.

"Top hole," Roberta answered. She was mighty happy that this was the end of the observation trip because she was anxious to be at home. She opened the throttle, the

plane ran smoothly over the field, lifted ever so slightly and nosed into the air. Zooming up, up, up they went in fine style. She circled once, then, when they were five hundred feet in the air, she set her course for the river, and following its narrow ribbon-like line, they sped forward, above beautiful hills, valleys, villages and towns until at last great sprawling Manhattan loomed into sight.

"The world always looks so clean from the air," the girl said to herself, "even cluttered, dirty New York." There were several ocean liners in the harbor and as she watched them steaming along like black points with long triangular, white-edged tails in their wake, a whimsical idea came to her. "If people on other planets could have telescopes sufficiently powerful to bring the earth as close as this, they will think the long parts are some sort of engines, and the dash at the end is a rudder."

The thought made her smile, and presently she was speeding over Long Island and she drew a deep breath of content as their

own airdromes came into view. A few minutes later she saw half a dozen planes in the air and she knew that some of the pilots were experimenting for the afternoon event. She shut off her motor and began the long, gradual descent, the wheels lighted on the ground, did a little hop, then whirled gracefully to a stop.

"Great work," someone shouted, and several of the men came to welcome the returned travelers.

"You are back in time for the doings. There is to be a luncheon in the factory and places are set for you all." That was Mr. Trowbridge, Roberta's own boss, and he was beaming with satisfaction at the success of Mr. Wallace's trip.

"We came at air-express speed. I thought Miss Langwell would burn up the motor, and the wings would be ripped off any minute," Mr. Wallace told them.

"You're lucky to get here with a whole skin!"

"We averaged ninety miles an hour," Roberta protested, and Mrs. Wallace laughed.

"Roberta will be glad to be rid of you and your teasing." Roberta flushed because she had not learned to tell when he was serious.

"Come along, we're going to have speeches and everything," announced Phil Fisher, then he turned to Roberta and added softly; "What do you think?"

"About what?"

"I have a new plane, imported, if you please."

"How perfectly scrumptious."

"Isn't it! The whole family dug down and gave it to me on my birthday last week."

"Is it very different from the ones made here in America?" she wanted to know. She was keenly interested.

"Not so much, but she's a Moth Amphibian and can land anyplace, sea or earth," he explained. "Come on, jump in the bus and I'll drive you to the factory. After lunch I'll show you the bug," he promised. He helped her into one of the cars used for "short hauls" from one end of the grounds to the other.

"How did you happen to get that kind?"

"Remember the day you dropped your landing gear?"

"Of course. You and Larry Kingsley got a hydroplane to pick me up when I landed on the Sound."

"Sure. Well, it's no joke watching a fellow pilot doing a stunt like you did that day with the chances all zero against a safe landing, so, when I read about the three-element planes I decided that that was the kind I wanted. Furthermore, if you have no other plans, I'll take you to Montauk when the show is over."

"I'd love it," Roberta assured him.

"You can see how she goes. Only drawback is that the pilot seat won't hold two, but there's a place for a passenger. I'll have to show you the works before we start."

"Going to fly it this afternoon?"

"And how! Here we are." He brought the car to a stop at the main entrance.

"Hello, Miss Langwell. This way for the party," someone shouted, then Roberta thought of her flying togs.

"I haven't a dress for a party," she protested.

"You are in aviatrix full-dress," Phil assured her, then added, "Nobody is going to change. This is a regular party."

And it was. The huge factory with its high glass walls and dome, which was big enough to house two dozen planes to say nothing of as many more wings spread flat in the making, had been cleared for the occasion. At one end a caterer and his attendants bustled about putting the finishing touches on the dishes, while in the middle, tables formed a hollow square under lengths of swaying festoons, ferns, banners, streamers and flags.

"It's gorgeous," Roberta exclaimed rapturously, as she paused on a little balcony where she could get a good view of the place.

"We are stepping right out," Larry Kingsley told her with a grin. He just came in, and as he was now one of the executives of the firm, the "we" came naturally. "Glad you got back on time, Miss Langwell."

"So am I. Imagine missing anything so splendid."

"Phil is master of ceremonies, he'll help you find your place, and don't forget to eat. It's real food, not a lot of picky stuff for show." Larry came from Texas where he spent his life on a ranch, so "picky things" did not appeal to him.

"The turkeys came from the Kingsley ranch so even if you don't like them, you have to eat anyway," Phil said in a stage whisper. Just then the guests began to arrive in laughing groups, so the three hurried down, and in a remarkably short time, considering how many there were, the seats were filled. At each place was a name card and a jolly little favor. Roberta found a wishbone by her plate, and Phil, who was across the way, held up something she could not make out.

"I got the white elephant," he called.

"And I a baton," chuckled Mrs. Wallace brandishing it at her husband, who pretended to duck. The waiters were serving the hors d'oeuvres, and everybody began to chat either with his neighbor or with someone not so close.

"How do you like having a secretary pilot?" Mr. Wallace was asked.

"Fine. I'm working on a better telephone tube so I can dictate to her while we are flying." This time Mrs. Wallace did not catch the twinkle in her husband's eyes.

"Do you think it is not enough to chauffeur your bird—" Then Mr. Wallace and his friends guffawed heartily.

XII

ROBERTA BECOMES A PASSENGER

The luncheon took over two hours and was a lively affair. The turkeys were amazingly tender, and Larry had to respond to a toast offered to his native state and its products.

"Got any geese down there, Larry?" someone shouted, "Among the residents, I mean!"

"Naw," Larry retorted, "You ought to know that Long Island is the center of the world's web-foot chickens."

"Go on," Phil protested—"we have only duck farms out here."

Of course there were a number of speeches, but they were interesting ones, and Mr. Wallace gave a brief account of the trip he had just taken. Although he did not say anything to embarrass Roberta, he did let

one or two well-known facts drop during the course of his talk. After that the president thanked their special instructor, and he thanked the young sky-pilot who, he declared, "had earned the right to be with the A-Class aviators."

"Judging by the newspapers, you were the life of the party, Miss Langwell. I suppose you have a scrap book," someone teased.

"I have not," she insisted, and Mrs. Wallace came to her rescue.

"She rarely looked at the papers, but I kept an extra set of the clippings to present to Mr. and Mrs. Langwell."

"Good work, they will appreciate them if their daughter doesn't."

At last the meal came to an end, and the whole party tumbled into automobiles and busses and were hurried out to the field, where pilots and mechanics were already busy giving special planes a final inspection. There were not many minutes to spare, for other planes were arriving with spectators, and outside, the enclosure was packed with cars and a huge audience. For the next two

hours trials of all kinds were made, the feats and powers of planes and men recorded, while private and public officials looked on with the keenest interest.

Roberta watched the test of the Lurtiss new plane and her eyes shone as Larry Kingsley put it through its paces. It was all she had anticipated and she was doubly glad that she had not missed that part of the exhibition. Later Phil went up in his Moth and demonstrated, while in the air, how the landing wheels could be raised or lowered beneath the water floats. She thought it was wonderful, but she was sure the American model was still her favorite. The flyers were casting long shadows on the ground as they flew before the sun, and finally the event was over. The test machines were brought down and the heads of the firm warmly congratulated by everybody.

"When are they going to give the prize plane?" Mrs. Wallace thought it would be won that afternoon.

"That's for practical work, not exhibition," Roberta explained.

"Then you have a chance to win it," Mrs. Wallace said earnestly. "You certainly can do anything with a "bug", as my husband calls them."

"I should like to have one, but I do not expect to win it," Roberta said soberly. She was thinking of the growing account in the savings bank. In the past few weeks it had gone up most satisfactorily and she thought maybe she would have one next summer. It gave her a warm little glow under her ribs.

"Here I am. Come look at my bug, then we'll start. I promised the family I'd be home for dinner," Phil announced. Roberta excused herself to Mrs. Wallace and the two went to inspect the new acquisition. The Moth was certainly unique, with its extra long slender body, which was built for speed as well as endurance.

"She looks great," Roberta praised.

"The two landing gears are a good invention. Some of our engineers are trying to work up one for the firm. If they can not get anything as practical as this, they may

buy the rights for America. It's operated by that lever in the floor, see."

"Yes." Roberta was on tip-toe so she wouldn't miss anything. Then for a few minutes, Phil explained the difference in the controls, which did not seem too complicated. "It is great."

"Knew you'd like it. Let's start. Have a life-saver?" He fished out a package of mints from his pocket and ripped off the wrapping.

"No thanks."

"I will. That second dish of ice cream I ate was a poor investment. I should have passed it up," he grinned. "Some spread."

"Fine, but Phil, if you do not feel well, don't bother to take me home. One of the boys will, or I can fly myself," she urged.

"Pshaw, what's an extra dish of ice cream. Pile in and we'll be there in four jerks." He helped her to her place, she adjusted the safety belt, fished her goggles out of her pocket and slipped them over her eyes.

"All set," she called. "By the way, the cottage is on the shore, the bay is in the front yard."

"I'll land on the water, shift my gears when we are up. Now, watch her go."

He jumped to his place and in a minute the engine was roaring, the propeller whirling and the machine had started. Roberta was surprised at how soon they left the ground. Up the Moth shot at an amazing angle, performed a half circle, leveled off, then set her nose in the direction of Montauk, the furthest point on Long Island. It seemed odd, being piloted, but the girl did not mind, she was glad to sit back and enjoy the sky, which was a ceiling of blue with a few fluffy white clouds floating lazily. In an hour she would be with Mother and Dad, and she could spend the rest of the week swimming, fishing and have a good time generally. One nice thing about being away from home folk was going back to them, she thought happily.

The Hempsteads passed under them and a whole string of Long Island towns, some dating back before revolutionary days, but more of them almost brand new. Great fields in which she had picked baskets of violets

when she was a little girl, were now busy commercial centers or summer resorts, and rough wagon roads had been smoothed into famous highways over which thousands of automobiles whizzed daily.

In good time they flew over Orient with its tiny green and white houses, almost unchanged since they were erected long-ago by sea captains and fishermen. Out over the bay they soared, shot across Gardner's Island, and past the Point. The Moth was certainly making good speed. The sun was still high in the western horizon and Phil would get home in plenty of time for his dinner engagement. Roberta glanced forward at the good-natured young fellow and wondered if that extra ice cream still bothered him. She wished there was a speaking tube so she could ask, but there wasn't. She could see the back of his head six feet forward.

It occurred to Roberta that Phil was sitting rather low in his seat, then she remembered that she had not noticed how he looked when they started. She glanced over the side again and judged they were nearly two thou-

sand feet up, but it was a rough guess. Then her eyes wandered back to Phil. That is, they wandered back to where his head had been a moment before, but it wasn't there now. She shoved up her goggles to be sure they were not playing tricks on her, but the pilot's cock-pit was empty. She knew, of course, that it could not be empty because Phil could not have fallen out without her seeing him. Perhaps he was leaning over to adjust something. He might be changing the landing gear, although that could be operated with his foot. She waited a moment more, but no head came up. Then she remembered the extra dish of ice cream that had distressed him. He must be sick.

That was the only solution to the mystery. He must be sick, and Roberta, securely strapped in the passenger seat, six feet away, was sick with panic. She forced herself to wait another instant, then mechanically unbuckling the safety strap she stood up. The force of the wind at that height was strong enough to sweep her off into space, but she hung on to the rim of the seat. Some-

how, she had to reach Phil. The plane drove through an extra strong current of air and Roberta ducked forward on her face, threw her arms wide, then, slowly drew up her knees and feet until she was astride the long slender fuselage. Clinging with her whole body she began to edge her way forward. Then she wished she had taken some lessons in stunting. It took every ounce of her strength and courage to proceed toward that cockpit, which seemed miles away.

She did not dare hurry for fear she would lose her balance, and she was terrified lest the plane which was keeping an even keel now, should suddenly take a nose dive. The wind whistled through the wires and it seemed an eternity before one finger finally touched the forward rim, and a second later she had dragged herself far enough so she could see Phil, his head and shoulders humped, his hands hanging limp. Then she pulled herself in beside him and breathed a prayer of thankfulness. The plane seemed to shiver, and the altimeter showed they were going down. Roberta racked her brain to re-

member what Phil had told her about the Moth's navigation. Carefully she examined the dials and control board, and finally after trying out the unfamiliar mechanism, she felt relieved that she wasn't turning over.

Her next anxiety was Phil. She tried to shake him, but he only slumped lower, and she tried to pour water from the bottle down his throat, but she got it all over his coat instead. She loosened his collar, took off his goggles, and raised his head so he could breath.

It was no simple task trying to watch the plane and bring the unconscious young man to his senses. There wasn't room for her to sit in the cock-pit, but she doubled up like a jack-knife, and looked about for a familiar landmark. A few miles ahead she saw the cove where the Langwells had their cottage. Then she remembered about the landing gear and wondered if Phil had changed it. It seemed to her that the lever was in the same position as when he showed it to her, but she couldn't be positive. That was a predicament. It would make a great deal of dif-

ference which gear was in position and she did not know how to tell. She wanted to land on the water because then she could call to her father, or someone to come and help her. If she came down on land it would take her half an hour to get to the house, through the woods, and with Phil sick she did not want to waste so much precious time as that.

The sun was still above the horizon. It might help. Tipping the Moth's nose, she zoomed higher, looked about for the best place, and in the distance saw a high bare cliff. Leveling off and then dropping a bit, she raced for the point, circled between the sun and the bluff, her eyes on the bluff, and was finally rewarded with a fairly good shadow, which showed the wheels in place.

"We want the water floats," she declared out loud and pushed the lever over. Back she went to the cove, and presently, its motor shut off, the Moth began to glide down at a sharper angle than any plane she had piloted. It struck the water a resounding slap, sending a sheet of spray all over her, but she was able to guide it well to the shore. At

last it stopped and she sighed with relief, when she saw her father in a small boat calmly floating near the shore.

"Hello, Bob, what are you trying to do?" Dad called, in a surprised voice.

"Come here quick," she shouted.

"Be right with you." She unbuckled Phil's safety strap, and by the time Mr. Langwell drew his boat beside the Moth, she had Phil loose.

"He fainted, or something."

"I'll get him ashore." In five minutes they were taking him up the path to the house.

"What's the matter?" asked mother.

"Young man's sick," Dad answered briefly. Soon Phil was in bed and the two grown-ups were bringing him to consciousness.

"He said he ate too much ice cream at the luncheon," Roberta explained.

"He'll be all right shortly," Mother assured her. In ten minutes Phil was sitting up and blinking at his strange surroundings.

"What in heck—?"

"Guess you fainted," Roberta told him.

"Guess I did. That was some stunt. Say,—

why—we were in the Moth, weren't we?"

"We were."

"Mind telling me how come we are not at the bottom of the briny?"

"I crawled over—"

"Suffering cats—say—"

"This is my father and mother, Mr. Fisher," Roberta introduced.

"I'm mighty obliged to you all," Phil told them warmly, then he looked for Roberta, but she was gone.

"She wanted a swim before it is too late," Dad explained.

"Oh—"

"Drink this. It may not taste very good, but it will make you feel better," Mrs. Langwell urged and Phil obeyed meekly. When he thought of the girl climbing over the fuselage it almost made his sick again.

"Better let me telephone your family," Dad proposed.

"I shall appreciate it if you will," Phil responded. Ten minutes later Mr. Langwell returned, saying one of the pilots would be out.

"If you do not feel equal to going, you are welcome to stay here," Mrs. Langwell told the young man.

"Thanks, but I'd better get with my family," he replied.

"Then, go to sleep," Dad suggested. Phil didn't think he wanted to, but he closed his eyes, and the family left him to rest.

"I'll change and have a swim," Roberta decided. "Where's Harvey?"

"He and Bur went out in the motor boat. They ought to be back any minute," Mrs. Langwell told her. "We did not know just what time to expect you, but Dad thought it might be late."

In a little while the girl had changed into her bathing suit, and as she ran down to the cove she heard the familiar sputter of their boat and presently the two boys in it spied her.

"Avast there," Harvey shouted, and as soon as they were close enough, he leaped ashore. "Gee, Sis, it's good to see you."

"You look top hole, old man. How are you?"

"Top hole? I'm higher than that. Did Mom tell you that Bur and I start the aviation course next week?"

"We are rated as very promising material," Bur added with a wide grin, and Roberta couldn't help thinking how different they both looked from when she saw them last.

"Don't let us keep you from your ablutions. Anyone come with you?" Harvey asked.

"Phil Fisher. He isn't well, and is resting until someone comes for him," she answered, and without further explanation, dived into the water. It certainly felt good, and as she struck out she could hear the boys scrambling up the path to the house.

Roberta had a wonderful swim, but with the sun down she couldn't stay in long.

"Supper's ready, Sis," Harvey shouted from the little veranda.

"Coming," she answered.

They had just finished the meal when Larry Kingsley landed in the cove and hur-

ried to the house, his face was grave as Dad ushered him upstairs.

A bit later the three came down. Phil was pale and shaky, but his tall pal helped him. "You have been very kind," he tried to say.

"We didn't do anything out of the ordinary. Sure you feel equal to making the trip?" Dad asked, for Phil didn't look well.

"I'll be fine," he insisted. And soon they were in the plane. Someone was to come the next day for the Moth, and Harvey promised to see that nothing happened to it during the night. Presently the pair were off, and quite late that night, Larry telephoned to let them know that Phil was safe at home, and the family doctor was looking after him. They were glad to get the news.

That week (Roberta had been told to take all of it as a part of her vacation) was a gorgeous one at Montauk. There were not many families occupying the summer cottages, as the season was late fall, but the friends who were left planned all sorts of jolly wind-up parties. There were clambakes, corn-roasts, and bacon bats, besides

trips in the fishing sloops, the motor boat, and hours just swimming. The last night they sat around a huge fire, told stories and sang songs beside the dying embers that glowed bright red until the last spark had burned out.

The next morning bright and early, cars were rushing workers to jobs or business. Roberta, Mother, Dad and Harvey were in one of them, and the very first stop they made was at the factory, for both the young Langwells were to report that morning. When they drew up before the entrance, Larry Kingsley was at the door.

"Good morning," he shouted cheerfully. "Mr. Trowbridge is on the field, Miss Langwell. Wallace is out there too. I think they have a commission for you. They want you at the hangars," he added to Harvey.

"I'll have time to drive you out," Dad offered, and Larry joined them.

"How is Phil?" Roberta asked.

"Still in bed, but the doc says he'll be top hole in a short time," Larry answered. Presently the car stopped near the shed and Rob-

erta noticed that most of the heads of the firm were there. They seemed to be examining one of the new planes, an especially designed one with silver trimmings that glistened brilliantly in the sunshine.

"Good morning, Miss Langwell. Wish you would try this out and tell us if you think it has feminine appeal," Mr. Trowbridge explained.

"It certainly looks as if any woman would like it." She took her place in the cockpit and opened the throttle. The engine hit smooth as velvet, and in a moment, nose tipped, the plane rose like a live bird. Roberta's heart thrilled. She was piloting one of the beloved new planes. Of course it wasn't her own, but it was simply great to be soaring away in one, and quite an honor to have been commissioned for the flight. In ten minutes she came down and was surprised to see that Dad and her family were still there. Mother's face was wreathed in smiles and she was glad they had waited.

"What do you think of her?" It was Mr.

Fisher, the president of the firm, and Phil's father.

"She's wonderful; responds beautifully."

"Do you think a lady would like to own her?"

"Indeed I do," Roberta said soberly.

"Good. I am glad you feel so, Miss Langwell, because we are presenting the plane to you. My son told me what you must have done when he fainted in the Moth—you saved his life—"

"But I saved my own life too," Roberta protested.

"We appreciate that and feel that in saving two lives for the company, you have well earned the reward," he told her. "I know the risk you ran for my son. The doctor says that if he had not had help quickly he might have suffered a long spell of sickness—"

"I am glad he is better, but—"

"No buts," Mr. Wallace spoke up. "The firm offered a prize for A-One flying service. Now, I suppose when I want a pilot-secretary, I shall have to go flying after this bird."

"If I am in it you won't catch me," Roberta laughed. Her hand was on the wing tip and it seemed as if the splendid plane were a part of her, but she felt uncomfortable about accepting it. "The boys, all of them do so many brave things—"

"The boys, every one of them, are tickled pink that it's yours," Larry Kingsley told her emphatically.

"Well—thank you, thank you so much." Then Mr. Fisher proved that he didn't like being thanked. He stepped back and let Dad take his place. "Did you know about it?" she demanded.

"This morning," he admitted. "I am beginning to feel like a back number and am going to learn to fly. May I use your plane?"

"Just as soon as you are an A-One pilot," she told him. And that's how Roberta Langwell became the owner of one of the Lurtiss Airplane companies finest machines, and incidently, how she became the very happiest Airplane Girl in the whole country. She said so herself.

The End